

IT'S NOT DONE

by
WILLIAM C. BULLITT

BRENTANO'S LTD.

NEW YORK LONDON PARIS

First Printing, October, 1926.
Second Printing, October, 1926.
Third Printing, October, 1926.
Fourth Printing, November, 1926.
Fifth Printing, December, 1926.
Sixth Printing, August, 1929.

Made and printed in Great Britain
by
Chance & Bland Ltd., Gloucester.

To LOUISE BRYANT,
my wife.

IT'S NOT DONE

I

At the Pleasant Street corner of the Square a broad brick house squatted securely in the snow. A boy sat on the rail which guarded its brownstone steps singing "Hark, the Herald Angels" in time with the chimes of a church that darkened the next corner of the Square. The chimes fell silent and from all the surrounding parishes of the city of Chesterbridge other bells sent summons over the snow. Then the chimes began to scurry like late worshipers: Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry! Hurry, hurry, hurry, hurry! The inner door of the vestibule opened, a child pointed a popgun at the boy seated on the rail and shouted "Boom!"

John Corsey fell backward as if he were dead. His head struck the flagstones and he lay quite still.

"Look, mother! I've killed him again!"

A sable pelisse came through the door.

"John! Get up this instant! You'll ruin your clothes!"

... Randall! Quick! Johnny's hurt!"

A frock coat came through the door.

"What is it, Alice?"

"Oh, Randall, can't you ever hurry!"

Dr. Corsey finished washing the wound on the back of his son's head and counted his pulse.

"No fracture, I'm sure. He'll be all right in a minute. Isn't he lovely?"

"Oh, Randall, how can you!"

"There's nothing to worry about, dear, and he is lovely. It's as if he had a light inside him. And you can blame

yourself for that, Miss Greville. No Corsey ever had that translucent quality."

"There!"

John Corsey opened his eyes.

"Johnny, why did you?"

"Ask him later, Alice."

"Johnny, you've frightened us horribly!"

The boy raised his hand to his head. "I'm sorry, mother."

"But why?"

"Bobby's been shooting me dead all day."

"That's no reason to fall off the steps and almost kill yourself."

"But Bobby was expecting me to do it."

"That's a nice reason!"

"That is a nice reason, Alice."

"Randall!"



John Corsey, tiptoe, reached for the box of caramels on the top shelf of his mother's closet.

"Now, Augusta!" Skirts swished in the hall and he shrank behind the long black muslin bag which held the latest evening gown that Worth had sent his mother. His Aunt Augusta did not answer and his mother questioned: "Well?"

A sound as if some one were being choked came into the closet.

"Augusta! Pull yourself together! What is it?"

The sobs continued.

"My dear!"

"Alice, he's ashamed of me. . . . Drayton's ashamed of me!"

A silence.

"Yesterday . . . I wanted him to walk down Purchase Street to buy baby clothes and he wouldn't go and we . . . and I realized that he was . . ." Again Augusta Greville choked and John put his fingers in his ears and stood a long time trying not to hear.

When again he listened, his mother's voice was clipped, immaculate: "Well, Augusta, you brought it on yourself. You came to Chesterbridge a stranger. We took you in, accepted you. You were invited even to the Concourse. Then you seduced Drayton."

"I loved him!"

"There's no other word for the action of a woman who takes a man from his wife and children by becoming his mistress. You were his mistress and he'll always regard you as his mistress. If you'd been married by the Archbishop of Canterbury instead of by a London magistrate it would make no difference. Blanche is his wife and Ellen and Edith and Tommy are his children. Suppose he had gone shopping with you and met them!"

"I could have faced them."

"My dear, you were brought up in Munich. Drayton is a Chesterbridgian. With us a gentleman does not marry his mistress or, if he does, he never respects again either the woman or himself."

Choked sobs moved past the closet. Water spurted in his mother's bathroom. John ran.

His Aunt Augusta was crossing the Square, her blond head bowed into the muff which always carried peppermints for him. His breath made mist on the pane. In it he traced the letter *M*.

"Gee!"



The snow fort was held by Corseys and Grevilles and Sinclairs and Chathams. The micks were advancing across the Square to attack it: twenty ragged urchins armed with sticks and snowballs, one girl, hot brown eyes and a sullen mouth under a red tam-o'-shanter.

"Hold your fire till you can see the whites of their eyes!" Theodore Corsey commanded the defenders. He had returned from St. Jude's for the holidays with a New England accent and an air of superiority and resumed his leadership of the gang, ousting John. A snowball whizzed past his ear and the micks charged, but the

ammunition piled in the fort flew so fast that the attackers drew off for a consultation. Again they advanced, dividing to right and left. They charged. Their leader reached the walls. A kick in the jaw from Theodore sent him off howling and they retreated. When they charged again, the girl led them. On they came to the walls of the fort, snowballs flying, sticks beating, small hands digging frantically. The girl climbed the wall and swung a broom handle at Theodore Corsey.

"Charge!" He leaped, crushing her to the snow. Over the wall jumped Corseys and Grevilles and Sinclairs and Chathams. Forty children struck, scratched, bit, kicked. The micks fled, all but the girl. She could not. Theodore was seated on her back pounding her nose into the snow.

"Let her up, Ted." John Corsey tugged his brother's shoulder. "That's enough."

"She hit me in the eye with her stick." Again Theodore pounded the girl's nose into the snow.

"Let her up!"

The girl's neck turned and her teeth caught Theodore's thumb. He yelled and she was up, running, all the pack pursuing her.

John caught her: "You be my prisoner. Come on! In here!" He jerked her up the brownstone steps, rang the bell and faced the victorious army: "She's my prisoner. Nobody touches her!"

"He's a traitor! A traitor!" A snowball flew. Pounder opened the inner door. A snowball whizzed past his head. John drew his captive into the house and slammed the door. Theodore's face appeared at the glass.

"Open the door, John! You cawn't take a girl like that into our house! You wun't? I'll beat hell out of you when I catch you."

"No, I wun't and you cawn't!" John led his captive to the music room and bowed toward a yellow brocade chair. She sat down.

"You're crying. Did he hurt you much?"

"I'm not crying. It's the snow melting on my face."

"What's your name?"

"Nina Michaud."

"Mine's John Corsey. How do you do?" He rose gravely and shook hands. Water was oozing down the yellow brocade of the chair in which Nina sat. He squirmed, eyes on the spreading stain. Feet moved in the room above: his mother's room. His eyes twitched nervously. "I guess you'd better go down to the kitchen," he said.

"I won't go to anybody's kitchen." Her dark eyes blazed and she made for the front door. Theodore was kicking it.

"Please don't!" John took her hand. "He'll hurt you. Come upstairs with me."

Half an hour later Mrs. Corsey opened the door of the trunk room. Her youngest son, Bobby, naked, carrying an umbrella, was walking gravely up and down before two trunks on which were perched her son John and Nina Michaud, wearing only their underclothes.

"Don't come in, mother! Don't stop us!" Bobby strode on under the umbrella.

"John!"

"Don't you see, mother!" Bobby raged. "They're Adam and Eve and I'm God walking alone in the cool of the day."



John Corsey awoke. Whee. Whee. Whee. Toot. Toot. Toot. A whistle and a horn blowing in the next room. Screams of delight from Bobby and his little sister Eleanor. Christmas Morning! He dived for his stocking. It felt strange. No bumps or bulges. No packages festooning it. Straight and stiff. He carried it to the window. A bundle of switches. He stared and stared.

Bobby was yelling: "Oh, Johnny! Come and see what I got! What did you get, Johnny?" He hid the stocking in his bed and dressed. "Johnny! Come see! What did you get, Johnny?" He hid the stocking under his coat

and fled downstairs. The arc lights were still shining in the yellow fog that hung over the Square. Through the sleeping city he ran, making for Kernel Street Bridge, faster, faster. Dirty ice cakes were floating down the river. He waited till a space of open water showed, then dropped the stocking; but an ice cake slid under the bridge as it fell and the stocking rode serenely downstream. He watched till it was out of sight, then walked down the steep stair to the river bank and sat until he was very cold.

Waits with a trombone were singing "Oh, Little Town of Bethlehem" when he returned to the Square and the postman was carrying packages up the brownstone steps.

"Merry Christmas, Pounder."

"Merry Christmas, Master Johnny. Did you get the skates you wanted?"

"Oh, I got lots of things."

There was a long pink envelope in the mail: his school report. Pounder was signing for a registered package. He slipped the envelope into his pocket, ran upstairs, and hid the report under his mattress.

"Johnny, what did you get?" Bobby, mouth smeared with chocolate, ran in waving a horn and a box of paints.

"Oh, something."

"Johnny, tell me."

"It's a secret."

"Was it nice?"

"Lovely."

"Good morning, chickies! Did Santa bring you nice presents?"

"Wonderful, mother, wonderful!" Bobby flung his arms around her knees.

John walked into the bathroom.



It was evening and he was wedged in the back seat of the sleigh between his father and his Aunt Muriel.

Theodore and Bobby were on the front seat between Patrick and Uncle Fulke Greville. Aunt Muriel's husband, the Earl of Sherbury, had started ahead in the brougham with Mrs. Corsey because the bays could not pull the brougham through the snow to Kingsale nearly so fast as the trotters could pull the sleigh.

"It can't be twenty years since I left!" Aunt Muriel scanned the Square. "Nothing's changed. Not a new house. Yes! There's a tram!"

"Trolley."

"Tram or trolley, you should never have allowed it, Randall! Chesterbridge ought to have been embalmed just as it was and put under a glass bell like a wax flower piece."

"Do we look that lovely from London?"

"Not lovely: unique. You belong in the British Museum, not the National Gallery. Is there any other city of a million in the world in which every one who counts lives in an area three streets by eight surrounding a Sacred Square? I've been away twenty years and I'll wager I can tell you every person you've met at dinner in the interval and that there'll be no one I'll meet while I'm here who'll not call me by my first name."

"Or who'll admit that you live elsewhere." Fulke Greville hoisted an arm over the seat back. "The last time I came home, after three years in Turkey, and turned up at the opera, Jim Bute remarked, 'Ah, Fulke, you've not been going out much lately.'"

Chuckles.

"And I suppose the privilege of dancing at the Concourse is still the summum bonum."

"More than ever."

"And that you still refuse to admit the existence of New York."

"Except as a convenience: a place to keep theatrical troupes and ladies who are no better than they should be."

"Does father still . . ."

"Every Friday Pullen packs his bag and he comes back Monday morning."

"At seventy-eight! He's marvelous!"

The sleigh was thumping through the Park under the bare horse chestnuts that lined the River Road. A team of grays swung in from a side hill.

"It's the Weasel!" Theodore shouted. "The Weasel! The Weasel!" Bobby took up the cry.

"That's something new," said the Countess. "What is it?"

"The offspring of a Haskell and a brassie," Fulke Greville turned again. "Randall's accountable. The boy was caddying for him at your father's course. Randall sliced as usual. The ball knocked the boy flat and Randall performed his usual penance: got Ralph to take the boy into the Bank. He's been there just six years and already he's running the show."

"What's his name?"

"Feather or Whether or Tether."

"Leather," said Dr. Corsey. "A deserving young man."

"How's he got on so?"

"Brains, plus the partners," Fulke Greville snorted. "They haven't any. Leather has. So Leather runs the business. He's still officially a clerk but he'll be a partner inside five years."

"Is he a gentleman?"

"Leather?" Dr. Corsey smiled.

The grays were drawing closer. Dr. Corsey leaned forward, "Redmond, I seem to hear something."

The coachman clucked and tightened the reins. The trotters settled down till their bellies seemed to be barely skimming the snow and hard-packed cakes hailed on the dashboard and over the sleigh.

"Randall! It's too fast!"

"I can't be passed by Leather."

The grays were lost. Dr. Corsey leaned forward. "Redmond, I hope you've not been racing. You know

how I disapprove of racing. Did I observe Mr. Leather's team?"

"No, sir, I think not, sir."

"Oh, Randall! Nothing's changed at all." The Countess was wiping tears. "You've taken the place of father and Leather has taken the place of MacMahon, that's all. I'll wager children are still forbidden to throw a baseball in the Park on Sunday."

Fulke Greville turned again. "My dear, in Chesterbridge on Sunday every human activity is prohibited except—"

Dr. Corsey coughed loudly. Bobby squirmed. "Johnny, what did you get? . . . Father, Johnny won't tell us what he got."

"Then it's not very polite to keep on asking him, is it, Bobby?" Dr. Corsey's hand covered John's.

The sleigh bumped over a grade crossing and thumped slowly up a long hill.

"There's Kingsale!" Theodore shouted.

The sleigh slid along a high stone wall, turned through a broad gate flanked by lodges and followed the curves of a drive that wound between chestnuts and maples.

A blaze of light on the snow.

Thirty cousins and aunts and uncles. "Dear Muriel!" "Oh, Fulke—so glad!" "Muriel! After so long!" Rush Corsey, grandfather, President of the Road, white nut-ton-chops accentuating the square of his jaw. "Merry Christmas, sir." "Merry Christmas, Randall." "Merry Christmas, Mr. Corsey." "And to you, Theodore." "Merry Christmas, Mr. Corsey." "And to you, Johnny." "Merry Christmas, Mr. Corsey." "And to you, Bobby. Well, to think of Bobby seven already! Can you cut the cake without cutting yourself, Bobby?" "Oh, yes, sir, I'm sure, sir." Anna and Mary and Esther and Katharine. George and Joe and Peter and James. Lorna and Frances and Edith and Susan. Miles and Gerald and Michael and Tom. "I got a pony, a sled and a gun." "Tommy, if you

tease Edith—"A doll and a carriage, a knife and a whip." "What did you get, Johnny?" Alice Corsey, all white, walking slowly up the staircase with the Earl, showing the family portraits. "And that is the South Carolina signer."

"Will you take my arm, Muriel?"

Silver plates on heavy linen, mountains of fruit and trees of roses, forests of candles, deep cut glass. Twenty-dollar gold pieces under children's napkins. "Bobby, if you throw bread balls you won't be allowed to cut the cake." "I got a bat, a ball, and a glove." "I gotta, I gotta, I gotta, I gotta . . ." "And the Governor asked, 'What is a Greville?' and Alice said, 'Almost a Corsey.' Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" "What did you get, Johnny?" Grapefruit, black bean soup, terrapin, turkey and cranberries, roast beef, asparagus, canvasback duck, salad, Camembert, Miller's coffee ice cream, plum pudding blazing! "Bobby! Bobby! Bobby!" "Bravo, Bobby! You've cut it beautifully!" Fruit cake. "And now a health to all the Corseys!" Champagne even for Bobby. Marrons glacés, chocolates, peppermints, raisins, walnuts, figs, and dates. "I gotta, I gotta, I gotta, I gotta." Fidgets . . . Fidgets.

Bells! Santa! "Put your hat on, Bobby!" "Why?" "Because you're a Corsey!" Santa! A pack so big he can hardly carry it! Cheers! Down the pack to the floor. A scowl. "Take your hats off, children! I'm King of Christmas!" A shout. "We're the Corseys! And we don't have to uncover for the King!" Santa fleeing, children scrambling. "I say, what's that mean?" asked the Earl. "Don't you know?" "Where's Debrett? Where's Debrett?" "There!"

Sir John de Courcy, a valiant soldier, conquered Ulster in 1180, and remained Lord of that province, until upon the accession of King John he was taken prisoner, deprived of his province . . . and estates, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment in the Tower; it is said that after he had been confined about twelve months a dispute arose between France

and England relating to the Duchy of Normandy, and the decision having been referred to single combat, he proffered to represent England in the fight; he and the French Champion having entered the lists the latter was seized with a sudden panic and fled the arena, when the victory was awarded to England; for this service the King restored him to his estates and offered to grant him anything within his gift; he, however, only asked that his successors might have the privilege . . . to remain covered in the presence of His Majesty and all future Kings of England, a request that was immediately granted.

Arms,—Argent three eagles displayed gules, ducally crowned or. Crest,—Out of a ducal coronet or, an eagle displayed with two heads argent. Supporters,—Two unicorns azure, armed unguled, crined and tufted, gorged with collars adorned with crosses pattée and fleurs-de-lis, and chained, all gold. Motto,—Vincit omnia veritas. Truth conquers all things.

"Positively, I'm a parvenu!" said the Earl.



"Now please clean your teeth." Mademoiselle was desperate. "I'll give you each ten cents if you will."

Theodore took the dime and reached for his toothbrush. Bobby took the dime and ran. John walked off to bed.



His mother bent over him. He kept his eyes closed and tried to breathe evenly.

"Johnny, I must talk with you before I go to bed."

He rubbed his eyes as if he had been awakened.

"It hasn't been a very happy Christmas for mother. You've made her as unhappy as you've made yourself."

A pause.

"Johnny, promise me you'll try to be a better boy. You must learn to restrain yourself. Stop and think before you do anything. You ruined my two nicest chairs and

you made Bobby do a dreadfully immodest act. A girl like that child you brought into the house can fill a little boy's mind with naughtiness in an hour. She's not like the nice girls you meet at dancing school. I want you to promise me you'll never again have anything to do with that sort of person. It's all very well to send poor people to the kitchen if they're hungry, but to bring into the drawing-room . . . A gentleman doesn't do that sort of thing."

A pause.

"Answer me, John." She covered her eyes with her hands. "Oh, you make me so unhappy!"

"Mother!" His arms clutched her neck and his tears wet her face. "Oh, mother, don't cry, please don't cry! I didn't mean any wrong, whatever I did. I want to do what's right!"

He was groping under the mattress. "I hid that, too."

"Your report! . . . Fifty demerits and a zero in German! John!"

"I couldn't help it, mother. Mr. Frankel said I let George Daly copy off my paper and I said, 'You're a liar, Mr. Frankel,' and he sent me out of the class and said I couldn't go back ever unless I apologized and I wouldn't."

"Randall!"

His father strolled in from Bobby's room.

"Randall, John's German teacher accused him of cheating and John quite properly said the fellow lied and now he's not allowed to go on with the class."

"What's his name?"

"Frankel."

"I'll see about having him dismissed. You were quite right, Johnny."

"Then you don't think I was bad?"

"Certainly not."

"And now Johnny's promised me to be a good boy always, and to stop and think, and to try to keep out of trouble and not make us unhappy ever again."

A lovely kiss. "Good night, darling."

"I want to do what's right."



Mrs. Corsey was shopping and John was seated beside her in the victoria, agreeably aware of the eyes of the pedestrians. From time to time Patrick reined the bays and Peter jumped off the box and ran into a shop and out came the proprietor.

"Two pounds of Mr. Greville's mixture and a pound of nougat, Mr. Pascal."

"Thank you, Mrs. Corsey."

The bays moved on, snapping their feet off the pavement as if they were stepping on glue.

"Three pounds of muscats, Mr. Hartington, and two boxes of strawberries." "Thank you, Mrs. Corsey."

"The crest on the new dinner cards is too large, Mr. MacDonald. You will have to alter the plate." "Thank you, Mrs. Corsey."

"Now, John, you can run over to Norman's while I see about the resetting of my stars at Constable's."

Mr. Norman always wore a derby as if he were a customer who had just dropped into his own flower shop, so that persons who did not go to the Concourse could not presume to give him an order. The salesmen wore black skullcaps. As John entered Mr. Norman came forward. "Good afternoon, Mr. Corsey."

"How do you do, Mr. Norman?"

"Nicely, thank you, Mr. Corsey. Something for your partner at the Easter Cotillon?"

"Yes. An old-fashioned bouquet."

Mr. Norman turned. "George, any old-fashioned bouquets made up?"

Three masses of rosebuds held tight by fringed paper collars appeared on the counter.

"I'd rather have a design of my own, Mr. Norman."

"Certainly, Mr. Corsey. Have you thought what?"

"Solid red rosebuds and in the center two yellow."

"Make a note, George. Red rosebuds and in the center a yellow."

"Two yellows."

"Two. I beg your pardon, Mr. Corsey. Thank you. Will you have a carnation for your buttonhole?"

"Thank you, Mr. Norman."

Boys in blue suits and girls in white and pink and blue chiffons were hurrying up the stairs of Steinway's Academy, where Chesterbridgians had learned to dance for half a century. John Corsey, holding the box which contained the bouquet of his own design, stood at the door of the girls' room waiting for Mildred Ashley.

"Who have you got for the german, Johnny?"

"Mildred."

"No, you haven't." A heavy youth with a broad Teutonic face pushed through the knot of boys. "Mildred's my partner."

John stared a moment and without speaking turned his back. Howard Roediger's father owned the department store which was gradually devouring the little shops of Purchase Street, and Howard had been admitted to the dancing class only that year.

Mildred Ashley's blond head and black eyebrows appeared. She was wearing orchids, purple orchids.

"I thought you—I—you—" John thrust the box which held his bouquet at her.

"Oh, John, I'm so sorry! I remembered to-day that I promised Howard months ago."

"You . . ." John turned abruptly and walked upstairs to the high gallery above the dance floor which served as the boys' dressing-room. The orchestra, augmented to five for the occasion, had begun the "Blue Danube." John took off his dancing slippers.

Mr. Steinway puffed into the room:

"Downstairs, boys! Downstairs, boys!" he trumpeted through his nose at the empty benches as if John were a multitude. John began to lace his shoes.

"Mr. Corsey, you're not going home!"

"My partner didn't come."

"Gloria Romney's didn't either. You can have the german with her."

"Gloria Romney never had a partner."

"She'll be so glad to have flowers." Mr. Steinway ignored John's remark, picked up the box and started to walk off with it.

"Come back with that, Mr. Steinway."

"John! You wouldn't be so mean as to leave Gloria without a partner for the german. Your father never would have done a thing like that."

"I'll dance with her, but you put down my flowers." John kicked off his shoes.

"You won't give them to her?"

"I'll be down in a minute." Mr. Steinway puffed off. John opened the box and drew the bouquet from its bed of oiled paper. Mr. Steinway's voice sounded below: "Take your partners for the german!" John stared at the two yellow buds, pulled them out of the bouquet, dropped them in the water closet and ran to present the remainder of the bouquet to Miss Gloria Romney.



The opera was "Tannhäuser." "It's a struggle between the good and the bad that's in every one," Mrs. Corsey was explaining to John. "First there's the Venus music that seems to be intended to arouse everything that's bad in one, and then there's the pilgrims' chorus that raises up everything that's good, and goodness triumphs over evil."

"What's the boy know about good and evil!" Aunt Gertrude Carrollton snorted down her sunken nostrils. Although she was seventy, precedence at Aunt Gertrude's dinners still established rank in Chesterbridge and she still refused to receive the MacMahons in spite of Alexander MacMahon's admission to the Club and the marriage of his daughter to a duke.

"I do know all about it." John came to his mother's defense. "It's as plain as the difference between your right and your left hand."

"Bosh!" boomed Aunt Gertrude, and a blush began to climb to his hair; but the lights diminished before any one could laugh at him, and the orchestra began the Vorspiel.

When the lights brightened again and Galski was bowing in answer to the applause, John became aware of a young man leaning over the rail at the back of the box and speaking excitedly to his father. His father's face grew white, then red.

"You may say from me that all depositors will be paid in full." His father turned again toward the stage and resumed his applause.

The brougham was rolling up Pleasant Street toward the Square when Dr. Corsey said, "Alice, would you mind dropping me at Fulke's?"

"At this hour? Is something—"

"Winslow has shot himself and the Trust Company is short a million and a half."

"Randall!"

"And Fulke and I as directors will have to take care of the depositors."

"But, Randall, you haven't been to five directors' meetings in ten years! Why do you . . ."

"They deposited because we were on the board."

"There were Winslow and Yenks and Fillender and Roediger, too!"

"Do you think any one deposited because of them? Besides, Roediger resigned last month. I wonder if he knew what was coming."

"How much . . . how much will you have to?"

"Probably nobody will stand by but Fulke. In that case, three-quarters of a million each."

"But, Randall, we'll be poor!"

"No. But we'll have to sell Willowbrook and stay in

town this summer and let the horses go and about half the servants. I'll have to keep up the dispensary. I can't leave those poor niggers in the lurch. Confound it, even some of them deposited because I—"

"Isn't there any way out?"

"Lots: but you wouldn't want me to take them, would you?"

A pause.

"Certainly not," Alice Corsey said at last.

"Father, can't I ride any more? Can't I keep Major?"

"You'll have no place to keep him if we sell Willowbrook. Sorry, Johnny."

Fulke Greville hurried down the marble steps of his house on the Square and squeezed onto the little seat of the brougham beside John. "You've heard? I didn't want to spoil 'Tannhäuser' for you."

"Thanks. A reporter from the *Times*. I told him the depositors would be paid in full."

"So did I. And I've seen Roediger."

"Did he know what was coming?"

"When he resigned last month he sold his stock to Winslow. And Winslow must have paid him with money stolen from the Company. I believe Roediger caught Winslow and blackmailed him into taking the stock. I said that to him. He just laughed and said it was an ordinary business proposition: he needed money to buy the next store."

"Alice, will you please avoid any further purchases at Roediger's?"

"Certainly. What a shame it's so much the best shop in town!"

"Now, Randall, you let me handle this," Fulke Greville tapped Dr. Corsey's knee. "I'll see what the others will put up. Then I'll be responsible for two-thirds of the remainder and you for one."

"Fulke! You know we'd never agree to anything but equal responsibility," said Alice Corsey.

"Don't be an ass, Alice! I've five times what you and Randall have and no family, and you've spent God knows what taking care of those niggers."

"Does it occur to you, Fulke, that you're being a trifle insulting?"

"Sorry, Randall."

John Corsey lay on his bed. The voices of his father and mother came dully from the room below. From time to time his father whistled a few bars of "Maryland, My Maryland." John had not heard him whistle it since the night when they had waited together for Eleanor to be born. A breeze stirred the lace curtains and the shadows cast through them by the arc lights in the Square began to clasp and unclasp like the nymphs of the Venusberg. He crept to his bathroom, ran a half-tub of cold water and sat down in it. He shivered back to bed. "The rebel host is on thy shore, O Maryland, My Maryland." His father was still whistling. The shadows were still clasping, unclasping, clasping. An hour later John rose again, took a ruler from his desk and beat his left hand. Before he stopped there was blood on the palm.



"Come on! Come on!" John Corsey and Tom Athyn stood at the mark shouting to the racing boys who were to touch them off for the final lap of the relay. Slap! They were off together, thundering around the indoor track side by side. Into the home stretch they pounded, teeth bare, heads back: "Dead heat!"

"You're a good runner." John held out his hand.

"You're a mighty good runner!" Tom's long lips split over his white teeth.

They walked to the dressing-room together and took turns on the shower. "Come on, John, walk down the street with me," said Tom casually. "I don't care if I do," said John, striving to appear as casual. It was the first time any one had ever asked him to walk out of his

way and as he walked arm in arm with Tom the balls of his feet pushed the pavement with a spring like a dancer's. Tom lived in the old Athyn house, which was three doors from the old Corsey house that John's father had turned into a dispensary. Tom and his mother had never been able to move up to the Square because Tom's father had broken his neck hunting and hadn't left much money. John walked all the way home with Tom, but when Tom asked him to come in and see a new bicycle with a coaster brake he said, "No, I've got to go see my father; so long," and walked off abruptly, as if he had never had any reason to walk down the street except to see his father. He turned once and scratched his leg as if it had been itching him. Tom was standing on the steps watching him, so he had to pass through the Ionic portico of the old Corsey mansion.

His father was holding apart the eyelids of a negro baby who was squirming in her mother's arms.

"Johnny!"

"I just thought you might like to take a walk, father."

Such a curious, pleased smile came over his father's face.

"Sit down. I'll be with you in a minute. We'll take a ferry ride."

Dr. Corsey wrote a prescription. "Three times a day, Sally, with an eye dropper."

The negress took the paper but stood, shifting her feet: "Ah ain't got no money, Dr. Corsey. Sam's been on a drunk for nigh on two weeks."

Dr. Corsey took the prescription and wrote on it: "Charge to R.C."

"You'll have a mighty high throne in heaven, Dr. Corsey," the negress sniffled. "Massa Corsey, you-all's father's the best man in this world and don't you never forget it."

"Run along, Sally. Stop your nonsense." The negress backed out of the room.

John and his father were leaning on the ferry rail watching the gulls dip for the garbage that was floating down the broad, unbridged Sussex. "I think you can keep your pony, John." "I don't want him a bit, father. I don't care a bit. I'd rather go to work this summer." His father's hand fell on his shoulder and again his father was whistling "Maryland, My Maryland."

The ferry touched the dock at Effingham. "There's an old man here I ought to visit, Johnny. Funny old fellow, a bit of a writer, thinks he's a poet. You won't mind waiting a few minutes."

They walked to an alley where a two-story frame cottage was wedged between mean brick houses, and John sat on the wooden stoop while his father walked upstairs. He took his penknife from his pocket and he had carved the whole of a *J* in the wood of the steps before his father called. He mounted to a square room littered with books and papers and bits of twine and manuscripts. A huge old man, all white hair—white hair flowing from scalp and brows and lips and chin and even the backs of his hands—sat by a window in a broad yellow wood chair.

The old man took John's hand and held it. "I wish I'd left a dozen like him!" he said, then tried to heave his body from the chair.

"What do you want, Walt?" Dr. Corsey was at his side.

"Help me up."

The old man tottered to a table, wrote in a book, and gave the book to John.

"Thank you, sir. Thank you very much, sir."

"Don't call me sir. I'm Walt."

"Yes, sir."

A deep laugh rolled out of the beard. "Just like you, Randall, and I suppose you're bringing him up to respect all the mummified snobbery of Chesterbridge. Well, neither you nor I will live to see it, but he'll know before he's dead that I'm right. The final destiny of the

United States is to be heroic and spiritual, and that growth will come not from your culture but from the people who work with their hands: mechanics, ferrymen, farmers. As sure as there's a God above."

"Which is to say: not very surely," Dr. Corsey smiled.

"I didn't know you stood with Bob Ingersoll."

"I stand with Schopenhauer."

"Well, I'm against you, Randall, and everything you stand for; but you're a good friend and I thank you for coming. You won't have to come much longer."

The ferry was thumping back to Chesterbridge.

"What did he mean by mummified snobbery, father?"

"You and me, Johnny. He just doesn't understand people like ourselves. And he has some sort of a mystical idea that there's a virtue in democracy, that poor people and common people will some day make a great civilization of their own. He doesn't know that every civilization ever made has been imposed by a few aristocrats. He's kind and open-hearted himself and he sees every one in his own image, so he can't realize that people who haven't family behind them must be very rich and secure indeed before they will be decent. He has a feeling of noblesse oblige just out of his own body."

"What's that?"

"You wouldn't steal or be mean or cruel, would you?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Just because."

"Because of what?"

"Well, you wouldn't, father."

"Neither would any of us, and we wouldn't because we're Corseys, and Corseys don't do that sort of thing no matter how hard pressed they are. We may break but we don't bend. And if ever the United States is to amount to anything it will be because we make the people accept our standards. That'll be a job for you, Johnny. And that poor old man . . . well, you'll read his book some day."

"Can't I now?"

"If you want. You'll find it's mostly strings of nouns and words like 'democracy' and 'amativeness,'" Dr. Corsey laughed.

But that night John opened the book and read:

O tan-faced prairie-boy,
Before you came to camp came many a welcome gift,
Praises and presents came and nourishing food, till at last
among the recruits,
You came, taciturn, with nothing to give—we but look'd on
each other,
When lo! more than all the gifts of the world you gave me.

He read the poem three times over, then stood looking out at the spring stars above the Square.

"That's something like Tom Athyn," he said.



John Corsey and Tom Athyn were riding through Kingsale woods. Willowbrook had been sold but John still had Major, and Theodore and Bobby also had ponies: for Rush Corsey had died and Randall Corsey had succeeded him as master of Kingsale.

"I'm going to be a lawyer and Governor and Secretary of State and President." John jumped Major over a fallen tree. "I'm going to show people how they ought to live to have a great civilization." Major balked. A dead cat lay on the dry chestnut leaves. Tom slid off his pony and swung the cat by the tail.

"Don't, Tom. It's disgusting!"

"I want to dissect her."

"What?"

"Cut her up. See what she's like inside."

"You wouldn't!"

"Why not? I'll be cutting up people before long. Lend me your knife."

"Put down that cat!" John dismounted. "We'll bury her."

"No. I want to cut her up, she might even have kittens inside."

"You put her down. She's not your cat."

"She's not yours either."

"She's on my father's place and so are you, and I won't let you do anything so dirty as that."

"All right." Tom shrugged and flung the cat into the air. The crotch of a maple branch caught her and she hung, bobbing. "Now there'll be a fine stink," he laughed.

John looked at him in silence, then mounted and galloped through the woods into the open fields. A creek cut the meadow. He shook his crop and rode at it. Major refused. He turned the pony and again galloped at the creek. The pony wheeled. Tom rode up.

"It's mighty wide, John! It's dangerous! I won't follow you. Aren't you afraid to try it?"

"That's why I do it, you damned fool!" He waled the pony's hindquarters and the pony jumped.



"You won't come?"

"No, and you're an ass to go, Tom." They were standing in Harvard Square and it was spring.

"They're clean girls I tell you, and, hell, I'd rather take a chance than go on like you."

"You'll have a fine record to bring the girl you marry."

"I won't ask her any questions and I won't let her ask me any, and she'll be mighty glad I've learned what I have. When you marry, you and your wife will be babes in the woods. You don't know anything about life at all. You just go on imagining and torturing yourself and never doing what you want. Good Lord, John, you're a human being not a plaster saint! What do you think you are?"

"I don't know. Maybe just a fool."

"Oh, hell, John, I don't mean that! But it's unnatural. It's not good for you or for anybody. You'll hold your-

self and hold yourself until some day you'll just bust. Come on."

"I can't think it's right."

"Then think it's wrong but do it."

John shook his head. "So long."

Tom Athyn got on the car to Boston. John walked out Brattle Street to Fresh Pond, slowly at first, then faster and faster until he was almost running. He stumbled over a boy and a girl on the grass under a tree. He began to run. Somewhere there was lilac blossoming. He turned and ran back toward Harvard Square. Two girls were strolling arm in arm down Brattle Street. He stopped running and walked behind them. A blond head turned. The girls walked slower. Under a street lamp they halted. John passed. Their eyes searched his. He turned his head and hurried on. But his feet moved more and more slowly and at an Italian fruit store he stopped. The girls were approaching. He bought an apple. They passed. He stood looking at the piles of fruit. When he turned, the girls had disappeared. He crossed Brattle Street, eyes on the pavement. Then he saw the blond girl standing under a Harvard Square lamp post, alone. He halted and looked at her. She glanced toward him. He began to whistle and to walk nonchalantly. The window of the store behind the lamp post was filled with alarm clocks. He stopped and looked at the alarm clocks. Then he turned, and his eyes and the girl's collided. The corners of her mouth crept out and up.

"Nice night," John said.

"Lovely."

He walked on, quivering. The girl was walking behind him. A Boston car was standing by the curb. He stopped. The girl passed him and entered the car. The motorman rang his bell. The conductor rang his bell. The girl looked back. The car ground forward. John stood on the curb.

He flung the apple into the gutter, walked savagely to his room, sat down and began an essay for Royce: "Loyalty to loyalty: this conception . . ."

His pencil trailed down the pad and began to draw arabesques, legs, bellies, faces with large lips. "Hell!" He threw the pad into a corner of the divan, undressed and went to bed.

A mandolin was tinkling in the room below and four voices were bellowing: "We're poor little lambs who have gone astray. Ba, Yah, Ba." He put his head out the window. "For God's sake cut out that noise!"

"What's the matter? Afraid you won't get your beauty sleep?" The mandolin tinkled on and the voices sounded louder than before. He got out of bed and began to smoke cigarettes, lighting a fresh one from each dying butt. The night grew cool. He piled the remains of the winter's wood in the fireplace, lighted it, and picked up a sheet of foolscap on which he had listed the club elections. Under the caption "Boanerges" his name stood as his father's and grandfather's had stood. Under "A.P." was Tom Athyn's name as his father's once had been.

The door crashed open and Tom reeled in roaring.

"Oh, John, most won'erful night! Lord, what you missed! You should have seen—" He was overcome by laughter. "Dave Boonbie! Ha, ha, ha . . . ha, ha, ha, ha . . . We went to the Loire where Dave was having a party, and there was Dave in a room with Hal and Steve and Danny—all dead to the world but Dave, and champagne bottles and broken glass all over the floor—and when we came in Dave rang for the chambermaid, very southern gentleman always. 'Elaine, the room's not fit for my guests.' Danny woke up and took one look at her and yelled, 'Elaine, the lily maid of Boonbie's flat!' and grabbed her and threw her on the bed between Hal and Steve, and he'd torn off her shirt-waist before she bit him and ran. And Dave walked right to the telephone and called the manager and said: 'Send the chambermaid at once!'" Tom fell on the divan, overcome by the memory. "Why don't you laugh, you old anchorite?"

"Go to bed, Tom. You're drunk."

"Drunk, hell! I'm alive and you're dead: dead from

the neck down. A night like this and you sit here under your nice little picture of Sir Galahad!" He took the pad from the corner of the divan. "'Loyalty to loyalty: this conception.' Ha, ha, ha!" He flung the pad into the fire and picked up the sheet of foolscap. "Mr. Corsey of Boanerges! By Sir Galahad out of the Virgin Mary! My strength is as the strength of ten because my heart is pure! That didn't prevent you though from packing Hunty Gorham, did it?"

"What did you say?"

"I said Hunty Gorham never would have turned down A.P. if you hadn't broken the agreement and pledged him a month ago, Mr. Galahad of Boanerges!"

John's left fist crashed on his jaw. Tom's head thudded on the mantel. As he fell, he twisted and his mouth struck an andiron. There was a sharp little click. He lay on the floor, his mouth open, a bloody hole where two front teeth had been.

"Tom! Tommy! I didn't mean! Oh, Tommy!"

An hour later Tom Athyn rose from his bed and staggered into the study. "Jesus, John, my teeth!" Then he grabbed the back of a Morris chair and his bruised mouth gaped with horror. There was a smell in the room as if some one were grilling a chop.

"John! What are you doing!" He dived at the fireplace where John was crouching, his left hand in the coals.



"And you fought the case?" John Corsey and his cousin Paul, whose book on mining law had gained him the respectful admiration of his fellow lawyers, were walking toward the Law School. There was a web of scars on the back of John's left hand and the little finger was concealed by a stall.

"Naturally, I handle all the Anthracite Corporation's business."

"But you felt the old woman deserved damages."

"I was sorry for her. He was her only son and she talked as if she'd come out of a Synge play. And there wasn't much doubt that the explosion which killed him was caused by defective wiring. But her lawyer didn't prove that or any other sort of negligence. There was a plain defect in their evidence and the judge should have instructed the jury to find for us. I'm sure I'll win in the Court of Appeals."

"But how can you make yourself appeal a case like that?"

"Every one's entitled to his day in court."

"But when you believe yourself that there was negligence and that in justice—"

"It's not so pleasant to fight as some cases, but I'm not hired to pick and choose."

"Why can't you?"

"Baby needs a new pair of shoes."

"You mean the Anthracite people would drop you?"

"Certainly."

"Why don't you let them?"

"They're my biggest clients."

The little finger of John's left hand clamped down against the palm.



Professor Balder was putting cases to his class in criminal law: "In A's house is an old desk. In the desk is a drawer that A has never opened. In the drawer is a gold watch. Is the watch in A's possession or not, Mr. Corsey?"

"It is in his possession."

"B is walking down the street. C slips a pistol into B's pocket. B is unaware that the pistol is in his pocket. There is a law forbidding the possession of firearms without a permit. B is arrested for having the pistol in his possession without a permit. Is the pistol in his possession or not?"

"It is not in his possession."

"Why not?"

"He didn't know it was in his pocket."

"But I believe you said the watch was in A's possession although he did not know it was in the desk."

"I was wrong. It was not in his possession."

"X secretly has put a hundred-dollar bill in his wife's pocketbook for a surprise. She takes the pocketbook in her hand without opening it and goes shopping. Is the hundred-dollar bill in her possession or not?"

"It is in her possession."

Professor Balder raised his eyebrows and passed a handkerchief over the polished skin of his skull with an expression of infantile bewilderment that sent appreciative snickers rippling through the classroom.

"Do you still think, Mr. Corsey, that the pistol was not in B's possession?"

"It isn't just, Mr. Balder."

"My question, Mr. Corsey, was whether or not the pistol was in B's possession."

"It isn't just!"

"Mr. Corsey, you will find the Divinity School three blocks to the left."

The class roared its appreciation. John rose and walked out of the room through a tempest of guffaws.

When he reached his room on Brattle Street the finger in the stall was stuck tight to the palm of his left hand. He sat at his desk and looked at the finger, then with his right hand bent it back slowly to an erect position. He took a sheet of paper and wrote:

DEAR TOM:

I'm off to Chesterbridge and I'm not coming back. You're right. Law's no job for any one who cares about making life fuller and finer.

He looked at the paper, crumpled it into a ball, and started on a fresh sheet:

Tom:

Off to Chesterbridge and not coming back. You're right. Law's no job for any one but a crook.

Hope you found a nice stiff and that he wasn't too tough.

So long. I'd wait for you to come back but I don't want to spend another night surrounded by the young attorneys and I have just time to catch the Limited and be on the Square for dinner,

Good cutting.

Yrs.

JOHN.

P.S. I think I'll try short stories and I may take a twirl at reporting for the *Times*.

Yrs.

J.

He rose and looked out his window. His classmates were hurrying to lunch at Lincoln's Inn. He watched them stream up the steps and disappear into the club. "Nice fellows!" He stared a long time at the building, then picked up the note he had left for Tom Athyn and started to tear it. His cousin Paul Corsey came down the steps of Lincoln's Inn gravely explaining something to a blond youth who was looking up at him with awe. John put the note on the desk, weighted a corner of it with "Williston on Contracts," and began to fling clothing into a suitcase. "No!" he said, "I won't spend my life on that sort of thing."

II

John Corsey, naked, was seated in a wicker armchair before a long mahogany table which stood in the center of his room on the Square. His right hand was rubbing his wet head with a bath towel and his left was turning the pages of a manuscript. The hand rubbing his head moved slower and slower until it stopped and the towel dropped to his knees. He bent over the manuscript, making little unconscious gestures as he participated in the scene his imagination had created. He turned the last page, looked up, and caught the reflection of his eyes in the mirror which composed the door of the mahogany wardrobe. "It's good, really good!" he smiled at the reflection, and the reflection nodded approval.

Pullen entered with a tray on which were peaches, coffee, toast, marmalade, and the *Chesterbridge Times*. John took the paper and searched for the account of the murder at the glue factory which he had written the previous evening with intense care and a wealth of specific detail. "Damnation! Cut to two sticks!" He threw down the paper and bit into a peach. "Pullen, I'll want my evening clothes to-night and the runabout at the door at seven. Mildred Ashley's home from France and there's a dance at the Buoy."

"Very good, Mr. Corsey." The old valet was grinning. For thirty years he had laid out evening clothes for John's grandfather and the commands of the third generation of Corseys always amused him, especially when they were addressed to Pullen.

"And now give me my old gray flannel suit."

"It's not fit for you to wear, Mr. Johnny. It would be all right for me, but—"

"You won't get it yet, Pat," John smiled. "I need it in my business."

"Besides, it ain't pressed."

"All the better. I was in the telephone booth at the office yesterday when a fellow named Milligan, who's in the advertising department, yelled at the city editor, 'Who's the God-damned dude you've put on southern district?' That was I."

"You don't say, Mr. Johnny! What did you do? Have him dismissed?"

"Decided to change my clothes. I'm a cub reporter now and I'd better dress the part."

"Would you like me to crumple your evening shirt a bit to-night?" The old man's eyes twinkled.

"Thanks, two or three of your well known thumb prints around the buttonholes will be sufficient. Now beat it."

He dressed and walked down the stairs of the empty house. The rugs and the carpets were up, the chairs of the lower floors were mounds of white crash. It was June. His father and mother and his sister Eleanor were at Kingsale. Theodore, who had married the only child of the Paul Chathams, was at Bellagio on his wedding trip. Bobby was studying painting at Julien's in Paris. He walked into the dining-room and looked down at the yard. It was a yard which had almost attained the dignity of a garden and then relapsed because the house on the Square was never occupied in summer. A few late blooms clung to the lilacs which bordered the high brick wall that separated the grass from Pleasant Street. The ampe-lopsis vine which covered the dead wall of the Sinclairs' house next door was bright with fresh green shoots. High blossoms were forming on the two locust trees which rose above the lower wall. Between the trees a marble satyr's head protruded, and there was a dry basin below it into which the satyr had once spat a stream of water. The grass was thick and long. "Nice," said John. "Nice." He

walked to the hall. Pullen handed him his hat and unchained the double doors.

He crossed the Square and walked down Pleasant Street past four blocks of shuttered windows and unscoured marble steps: the houses of his friends and relatives, closed for the summer. East of High Street the character of the dwellings quickly changed. Stables, saloons, wooden tenements, cheap grocery stores and barber shops poured odors of manure, stale beer, sweat, decaying vegetables and bay rum into the street. Urchins, black and white, spun tops and threw ragged baseballs on the pavements. Then Pleasant Street ended in another square.

The founders of Chesterbridge had laid a gridiron of streets between the broad Sussex and the muddy Amsterdam and on the gridiron had placed symmetrically five squares, arranged like the five spots on a die: five squares identical in size and contour, each containing a block and a half of grass dotted with maples and walnuts and intersected by diagonal paths which met in a broad center. But the flow of two centuries had altered the squares much as it had altered the status of the families of the early immigrants. The central square had perished: the City Hall stood above it as tombstone. One square had become the center of the red-light district. One had been adorned with a brownstone Roman Catholic Cathedral and was inhabited by priests, Irish politicians and street-cleaning contractors. One was the Square, where Corseys and Grevilles and Sinclairs and Chathams played in their childhood and from which they were buried in their age. The fifth square, at the lower end of Pleasant Street, had drooped gradually from affluence to poverty until it resembled the threadbare old ladies who took boarders in the mansions of their great-grandfathers which surrounded it.

John Corsey knew the interior of but one house on the latter square: the house which stood at the Pleasant Street corner. It had always belonged to the Grevilles and Dray-

ton Greville lived there with his wife, Augusta, and the two daughters she had borne him, although a saloon had crowded against the back wall of the yard and there was not one of his neighbors to whom he spoke. John glanced at the open windows for a possible glimpse of his Aunt Augusta. He saw no one; but across a corner of the square he noticed a group that made him halt and laugh. A young woman in a blue smock was standing on a step-ladder stroking the lower branches of a maple with a broom. A group of idlers and ragamuffins, black and white, was gaping at the tree and from time to time guffawing at the remarks of a goat-faced tramp. John moved toward the maple. Then he perceived that the object which the young woman was trying to sweep from the branches was an unframed painting, a canvas representing a table on which lay a napkin, a number of apples spilling from a plate, a china bowl, and a lopsided pitcher.

"'Twon't come down." The goat eyes of the old tramp blinked and his mouth twitched. "Them apples knows where they belong better'n you. They're maple apples!" The children giggled and John noticed that the apples indeed resembled no fruit that he had ever seen on any tree. "And ain't you afeerd to break the pitcher?" The tramp licked a slobber from his beard. The broom suddenly descended from the branches and swished across his face. He dodged and fell, and the crowd guffawed.

"Good fo' you, Missy!" a negro chuckled, and John for the first time noticed the woman's face: dark eyes, like coals, blazing under black eyebrows, and a sullen mouth half opened.

"I'll have the law on you!" The tramp lurched toward the ladder.

"Beat it! All you!" The woman swung the broom in a circle, and there was an anger in her low voice that made the tramp stop, the children draw back, and the negroes walk off chuckling.

"Move along!" John stepped between the tramp and

the ladder. "Now try again." He turned to the woman.

"Closer. It'll fall this way." She stood tiptoe on top of the ladder and swung the broom. Then she, the ladder, the broom, and the canvas thudded on John.

"I hope you didn't hurt yourself." John rose. The girl was examining the canvas.

"It's not touched." She stroked the surface of the painting as if it had been the cheek of a child, picked up the broom, and reached for the ladder.

"Let me." John took the ladder and the broom.

"Thanks." Her eyes turned to him and suddenly he became aware of an immense curiosity about them. They seemed all pupil. The iris was so dark a brown that the line between it and the black pupil was scarcely distinguishable. Then her sullen mouth slowly curled back from her teeth. "You're the Corsey boy!" she said.

"Yes, I am." John searched his memory. "But I can't remember who . . ."

"I'm Nina Michaud."

His eyes were blank an instant.

"You wouldn't." She turned and crossed the street to the marble steps of an old brick house, which still boasted an Adam fanlight with only one pane missing. "You can leave the ladder here." She walked up the steps without turning her head.

"That's not fair!" John followed her. "Where was it?"

"What do you care? We won't meet again."

"I'll not go away till you tell me."

"I guess you'd better go down to the kitchen." She was mimicking his voice.

"You're the girl who . . . Oh, Lord! Do you remember mother's face when Bobby told her he was God walking alone in the cool of the day!" They laughed together.

"Missy, kin I speak with you a moment?" The negro who had applauded her stroke at the tramp stood at the foot of the steps twisting his cap in his hands.

"Fire away," she smiled.

"Well, Missy, my gal Sally is a right smart gal and she's been paintin' pictures nigh on to a year and I just want to ax you if pictures like that there one will sell. Will anybody buy 'em? My Sally kin paint that good or better. She done made a plate and a pitcher that's rounder and stands up straighter and is more like a plate and a pitcher than them there, and as fo' apples: you can taste hern. So I just want to ax you: where should she go to sell 'em?"

"I wish I knew."

"You mean nobody buys 'em!"

"One man, twenty dollars each."

"But dat's big money, Missy, and I reckon Sally could do two or three a week. What's his address?"

"Paris."

"Paris, France?"

"Yes."

"Shucks, we ain't never had no luck. Thank you, Missy." The negro moved away. Nina Michaud stood looking after him.

"What on earth are you doing, sweeping pictures out of maple trees?" asked John.

"Father," she shrugged, "throws his pictures out a window, cuts them with his palette knife, thinks they're not realized. And look! Isn't it superb?" She held up the canvas.

John looked at it. The apples seemed more unreal than before, the pitcher, bowl, and plate more out of drawing. "It's very interesting," he said.

She turned on him. "You mean you think it's rotten."

"No, only just—"

"Why don't you tell the truth?"

He stiffened as if she had slapped him and his voice was clipped to a contemptuous perfection when he said: "If you prefer. I think it's the worst picture I've ever seen."

"You would." She pushed through the doorway.

"Look here! Don't go away like that!" John followed. "It's too silly. I don't know anything about pictures. I beg your pardon. I'm sorry."

She turned at the first landing. "What for? Telling the truth?"

"Idiot!" he smiled. "You're as much of a child as the day we were Adam and Eve. Why won't you try to show me what you see in that picture? I don't understand it at all. You do. What is there in it that makes you say, 'superb'?"

"Form, volume, solidity. What other modern painter . . . Whose pictures do you like?"

"Well, I don't know especially, but I think that some of Maxfield—"

A laugh, abrupt, throaty, broke into his sentence and Nina Michaud disappeared. A door on the fourth floor opened and closed. John walked out of the house. The ladder and the broom were on the steps. He stopped, chuckled, picked them up, entered the house again and mounted the stairs. Nina Michaud's voice came from a room on the fourth floor, loud, defiant: "I won't let you, father! You've got to have shoes. So do I. It's worth twenty dollars. I won't let you destroy it!" The little finger clamped against John's left palm. A nasal drawl ran up the scale with a French intonation: "Listen, Nina, it's not realized. I will not send bad work! Give it to me!"

"I'll ship it to-day."

"*Sacré nom d'un petit popote!* You—" Feet were dodging as if he had plunged at his daughter and she had escaped him. A clash of voices muffled by intervening doors came into the hall. Then there was silence and John knocked.

A bald head, broadening upward from a tangle of ruddy beard, protruded and small dark eyes peered.

"I brought your ladder and your broom."

Abruptly the door closed, Michaud bolted to the front

room. "Nina! Nina! Somebody trying to get his hooks into me! Nina, come out! See what he wants!"

John heard her voice answer but could not distinguish words.

"One of the Corseys?" Michaud's voice was questioning.

The door opened and Michaud, smiling, but a trifle timidly, held out his hand. "Life's frightful, isn't it, Mr. Corsey? One never knows."

"Of course," said John. "Of course. Where shall I put the ladder, Mr. Michaud?"

"Thank you. Thank you." Michaud gave no indication and John leaned the ladder against the wall. "I was just helping your daughter to recover the canvas which fell out the window," he said. "Most unfortunate. Such a splendid work!"

"You liked it?" Michaud peered, incredulous, and his lower lip reached up and caught his mustache.

"Superb! Such form, volume, solidity! I'd like to own it."

"Mr. Corsey!" A smile crinkled the skin around Michaud's eyes. "You understand, then! Ah, what a pleasure! But it was very bad! Just a little scraping from my palette. I can show you so much better. But sit down, Mr. Corsey," he indicated a rickety couch with a lordly gesture, "and let me show you . . ."

John looked at his watch. It was past eleven and the City Editor was not appreciative of lateness. "I'd like to, so much, another time, Mr. Michaud, but just now . . . my office . . . Would you permit me at present only to buy that one?"

"Buy!"

"Yes, of course."

"You want to buy it?"

"Naturally."

"Dear Mr. Corsey! But a connoisseur like you, I should . . . Will you do me the honor to accept the gift

of perhaps . . .” Michaud ducked to a corner and drew out two canvases: an arrangement of irises and a portrait of his daughter. The door to the front room opened and Nina entered carrying the shreds of canvas to which Michaud’s palette knife had reduced the picture she had rescued from the maple tree.

“Mr. Corsey is a connoisseur, my dear,” Michaud beamed. “He really understands my work. Won’t you help me to persuade him to accept, perhaps this?” He indicated the irises.

“I’d rather buy the other, Mr. Michaud.” John kept his eyes away from Nina’s face and pointed to the canvas which bore the strangely solid portrait of her. “And as I must be going, would you mind if I . . . well, I know it’s very little, but would you accept fifty dollars for it?”

Michaud’s eyes fled for approval to Nina. He hesitated, wilted. “Dear Mr. Corsey, I couldn’t think of selling to you, it’s such a pleasure . . .” He spoke like a disappointed child.

“But I couldn’t possibly take it as a gift, and I want it, Mr. Michaud.”

“It’s nothing but a slight scraping from my palette and it would be such a—”

“No, Mr. Michaud, I’m an author. I live by writing. You’re an artist. You live by painting. I don’t give away stories.”

“Where do you publish, Mr. Corsey?”

“Mostly in the *Times*.” John flushed. “You understand, I’m just beginning . . . but you must let me buy the picture. I really want it.”

“Well, Mr. Corsey, if you . . . if you’ll let me give you the irises, you can buy the portrait.” His eyes defied his daughter.

“Thank you, Mr. Michaud. They’re splendid, too. Are they Japanese or German?”

“Paper.”

“You painted them from paper flowers?”

“They last so much longer. Don’t fade and droop just

as I begin to get the form. Real flowers die. Life's frightful, isn't it, Mr. Corsey?"

"Frightful! And now may I . . ." He drew out his wallet.

"Oh, no, not now, Mr. Corsey! You see that spot on the left hand, not painted at all. I've never been able to realize the exact . . . You must let me try to finish it."

"I'll call then, if I may, this evening, Mr. Michaud." He held out his hand.

"*A bientôt*, Mr. Corsey. Such a pleasure to meet a gentleman who really understands!"

"Good-bye." He turned to take Nina Michaud's hand. She had moved to the door and was holding it open. "Good-bye, Miss Michaud."

"You swine!" she said.



It was six o'clock before John finished describing the launching at Gripe's shipyard, which was his afternoon assignment, and started toward the house where Nina Michaud lived. The sun was still beating on the bedraggled square and, wherever a tree threw a pool of shadow, exhausted men and women were sprawled on the burnt grass. An old negro limped away from a maple-shaded bench and John sat down.

"Hello! You're on the paper now, aren't you? Like it?" A rich Irish voice questioned, and he looked into gay gray eyes. The man beside whom he had sat was George Milligan. John examined him with a faint hostility, mindful of his question about the "God-damned dude." But there was no enmity in Milligan's broad smile. It was quizzical, amused, and curiously fleshy: when he smiled his upper lip turned back and up, exposing an under muscle that lay like a red worm above his strong white teeth. And John was smiling when he answered: "I like it a lot. Don't you?"

"Not a damned bit!" Milligan closed the book which lay on his knee.

"Then why do you—"

"Job's a cinch, gives me lots of time to study."

"What are you studying?"

"This stuff." He held out the book. It was a Virgil.

"You're reading that?" John laughed.

"Well you may laugh. I've as much chance to pass it as to get into heaven; but it's required."

"You're going to college?"

"Trying for five years. I'll quit if I miss again next week."

"But why on earth do you want to go?"

"Why did you?"

"Oh, just because, well, one does."

"Hunh?" Milligan's gray eyes were twinkling.

"I mean, all the family. . . . Was your father?"

"Graduate of Bergheim's brewery and took a D.T. in Denny's saloon. 'One does'!" Milligan chuckled. "Well, maybe my children will be saying that."

"You're married?"

"Not yet, praise be to God. I've steered clear of virgins. But when I get through college, if I ever do—"

"But why do you want to go?"

"I'm in the advertising and I notice that the guys who write the best blurbs have all got their words at the damned universities. And, besides, we need an ancestor in our family."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you've got ancestors. I'm going to be one." He rose. "So long. I'll have to be getting along now. It's time for supper."

"Which way do you go?"

"Over there." Milligan pointed to the house with the Adam fanlight.

"I'm bound there, too."

"You!"

"Yes. Do you know an artist, Michaud, who lives on the top floor?"

"I've carried his coal since I was seven."

"You live there?"

"In the cellar, basement if you want to be polite. My mother tends the house."

They crossed the square together. "What's your father do?" John asked.

"Drinks. He's night watchman now at Denny's; but that's just Denny's way of makin' up to him for all the dimes he's rolled over the bar. What are you doin' at Michaud's?" Milligan's eyes peered.

"Calling for a picture I've bought."

"Jesusmaryjoseph! Has he sold one?"

"Yes."

"I'll tell mother to go after the rent to-night."

"Oh, no, don't! I wouldn't. . . ."

"What do you take me for?"

"Well, I . . . Excuse me. . . . Doesn't he ever sell anything?"

"Once in a year."

"How does he live?"

"Got a little income in France. And Nina—that's his daughter—makes dolls when she's not sculpin': portrait dolls. There's good money in that."

"She seems to be a very clever girl."

"Where did you know her?" Milligan was peering again.

"Oh, long ago, and I saw her to-day. Aren't her eyes amazing? Especially when she's angry. She seems to have a terror of a temper."

"Get mad at you?"

"Yes."

"What did you do to her?"

"I was trying to be nice to her father and help them out a bit and she misinterpreted."

"Well, I guess it was your own fault. Nina don't get mad for nothing. She's a great woman, Nina is. And when I get through college—"

"Oh! You're engaged?"

"She wouldn't say so."

"Do you?"

"No; but if ever I'm an ancestor, well, she'll be the ancestress."

They stopped at the marble steps. "So long." Milligan disappeared by the door under the steps. John mounted them and started upstairs. A scurry of feet came down to meet him.

"Don't come up!" Nina Michaud was leaning over the banisters. "I saw you crossing the square. Father's half crazy! That spot on the hand: he put a green on it, and now he says it's wrong and that he'll have to paint the whole canvas over starting from there. Go down and wait in the yard. There's a bench. I'll try to get the canvases." She was running upstairs. He walked to the yard.

From the open windows of the adjacent houses a stew of sounds and smells sank through the humid air. Men in shirtsleeves and women in faded kimonos were lolling on fire escapes bickering wearily. A boy was shouting, "Tararara boom de yay, tararara boom de yay," and beating a tin-pan accompaniment. Somewhere a baby was crying feebly. Cabbage and cauliflower odors drained from the kitchens. A remnant of a summer house overgrown by Virginia creeper sagged at the foot of the yard. Within it was a bench. John sat down to wait for Nina Michaud.

"There!" a boy's voice shouted, and John glanced through the basement windows of the house from which he had come. A boy and a girl were dragging George Milligan toward an object which stood in a far corner of the room behind the windows. The nature of the object John could not distinguish, but he could observe that the room had once served as kitchen to the entire house and that it had become kitchen, dining-room, living-room and bedroom to the Milligan family. Chairs, tables, a rack for drying clothes, and an ironing board were crowded about the huge stove, on which two pots were steaming. In a corner by the windows stood a Morris chair with shelves

of books above it. Opposite was a couch covered by a red and orange afghan bulged by a pillow. George Milligan stood looking at the dark corner. The boy and girl were staring breathless into his face.

"Ain't it wonderful?" The boy moved forward and John saw that the object was a phonograph: a phonograph of the latest and most expensive model. The boy's fingers were caressing the brass mouth of the horn. "You ought to hear it, George!" the little girl screamed. "It's as loud as a band in the Park!"

A tall thin woman came through the door which led to the front room of the basement.

"Ma! Can't we play it?" the boy appealed.

"Pa's still asleep." She walked to the stove. George Milligan turned and looked at his mother. Neither spoke; but a communication passed between them that seemed to crush them both. The woman bent over the stove, lifted the lid of a pot and leaned into the steam, and it seemed to John that she was crying. George sat in the Morris chair below the bookcase and opened his Virgil, his left elbow on his knee, his brow in his left hand.

"George, won't you!" the little girl began.

"Don't bother him, Rose. He's got to study," the woman by the stove snapped. "Go out and play till I call you for supper."

"Aw, Ma! Can't we?" the boy whined.

"Go on!" she said in a voice so urgent that the children went.

Mrs. Milligan turned and looked at her eldest son. He kept his head bent over his book. His mother looked at him a long time before she spoke. "Mary brought it home this afternoon," she said, and her voice was as desolate as if she were announcing a death.

George looked up. "Well, I think it's damned nice of her," he answered.

"But we can't keep it!"

"Why not? You've known six months she was on the street. It's damned nice to bring it here for the kids

instead of keeping it in the room she must have somewhere."

"But we can't take presents bought with money she gets like that!"

"What good will it do to throw it out? Make her go straight? Mary's a streetwalker and—"

"George!"

"Well, she is, and you and Pa have known it six months and you haven't peeped. I've tried to stop her. She won't stop. And now because she tries to do something nice for the kids and you have to face what's what I suppose you'll come down on her."

"I don't want to be hard on her, George, but Pa . . ."

"Has Pa seen it yet?"

"No. And I'm so afraid."

"It would be just like him to raise hell! And it's all his fault. If he'd ever stopped drinking long enough to give Mary a chance to go to high school or even to have decent clothes she'd never have—"

"Hello!" A girl swung through the door, the children behind her. Her gray eyes and black hair were like her brother George's. Perched on her hair was a purple velvet hat, from which an ostrich plume trailed. Neither her brother nor her mother answered her. "Well, what's the funeral?" She tossed her hat to the couch and crossed to the phonograph. "Got a match, George? It's as dark as a sewer in this corner." A gas jet spirted. She put a record on the machine and Caruso's voice poured "Celeste Aïda" into the kitchen. She sat on the couch, an arm around each child. Their mouths were open and their eyes wide with wonder.

The door to the front room opened and a man appeared. His head was bald and his face was blotched with patches of red veins and black streaks of unshaved beard. A dirty undershirt hung over his trousers. The little girl put a finger on her lips, imploring him to be silent.

"What in the name of the saints is that?" He stared at the phonograph.

"It's a phonograph, Pa! Mary's! Ain't it grand?" The boy jumped from the sofa.

"Where'd you get it?" He turned to his eldest daughter.

"Picked it up in an ash can, of course." Mary lolled back on the sofa.

"Where'd you get it?" He lurched toward her.

"Bought it. What do you think? That I snitched it?"

"Where'd you get the money to buy it?" His voice drowned Caruso's.

"Cut it out, Pa. You know damned well where she got the money!" George rose from the Morris chair.

"Hold your mug, boy! Take that thing out of here, and take it out quick!"

No one stirred.

Milligan tucked his shirt into his trousers and drew back his shoulders. Mary crossed her hands behind her head. He bent over her.

"Do you think I'll allow my house to be made the repository for the wages of your—"

"You damned fool!" Mary sat up slowly.

"Cut it out, Pa!" George walked forward as his father raised a fist.

"It's a fine lot of children I have! Me daughter a hoor and me son defendin' her and her own mother standin' by and lettin' her nastiness into the house to corrupt Rosie and Eddie. Either that thing leaves this house to-day or I leave it for good!"

"For good is right," said George.

"Hold your impudence, boy, or I'll . . ."

"Go wash your head, Pa! You've known all about Mary for six months and you've been glad enough to buy whisky with the money she's—"

"I swear by the Blessed Virgin Mary I've never known till now! And I'll never touch a cent from her again, nor speak to her again. I'm the head of this family, and I'm responsible for its honor. And Mary's the first by

the name of Milligan to drag herself in the dirt and I—”

“You dirty old drunken fool!” Mary was on her feet. “I suppose when you lie in the gutter dead to the world, I suppose when you sock mother or take a kick at Ed-die—”

“And you’re a liar, Pa!” George’s hand fell on his sister’s shoulder and he forced her behind him. “You’ve known all along about Mary. But you’d blink your eyes at anything so long as you could get drunk and didn’t have to admit it was true. Mary’s done a damned nice thing bringin’ that here for the kids to play. A nicer thing than you ever did for any one of us! And you with your dirty hypocrisy—” His father stepped toward him, fists raised. “Go on! Try it!” George dared him, and the elder Milligan hesitated, afraid of his son. “Try it!”

“Don’t, George!” Mrs. Milligan intervened and her husband turned to her, grateful for the excuse to conceal his weakness. “Am I right, or am I wrong?” he bel-lowed.

“I don’t know, Mike. I don’t know. Go wash your face. Supper’s ready.”

Caruso’s voice was silent. The needle began to scrape the center of the disc. Defiantly Mary walked past her father and stopped the machine.

“You’re all a lot of bums and that thing’s goin’ out of here!” Milligan, defeated, lurched to the kitchen sink and began to wash. Mary put on another record. The strains of “Mavourneen” came from the phonograph. Milligan dried his head, eyeing the instrument malignly, then stalked to the front room. The last note of “Mavourneen” trailed away. Mary put another record on the machine: “Oh, Paddy dear, and did you hear . . .” George returned to his chair under the book rack and picked up his Virgil. Mrs. Milligan spread a red and white cloth on the square table which stood in the center of the room and began to lay plates. Mary put on another record: a jig. The children began to dance. Around and around the room they hopped, bumping into chairs and tables,

laughing, shouting. Mary was beating time with her hands.

Milligan came into the room, shoved the dancing children out of his way, and thumped into his chair at the head of the table. He was obviously trying to preserve a demeanor of aloof contempt and to ignore the jig. But his toes began to tap the floor in time with the music. Mrs. Milligan stirred a pot. The music stopped. "Well, will you keep me waitin' all night for supper?" he scowled. "One minute, Mike," she smiled at him beseechingly. Another jig swirled through the room. Milligan turned and looked at the machine, and his feet began to beat the floor and his head to bob. The fiddles screamed the tune fortissimo. Milligan looked up at his wife. She ladled a plateful of stew from a pot and placed it before him. Then she smiled and he smiled back at her. Her hand fell on his shoulder. "Maybe it's got to go, but it's kind of nice to hear them tunes again, ain't it?" she said. They looked at the machine while the fiddles called louder and louder.

"Come on, Pa, let's dance," she said.

George Milligan bent over his Virgil, his left hand covering his eyes.

"No use!" Nina Michaud suddenly called from the door to the yard. John tiptoed to her side.

The Milligans were dancing.

"Father won't let it go," said Nina. "Good-bye."

"Oh, don't go away! You can't! I've just seen . . ." John took her hand. "Come outside a minute. I have to ask you . . ." He was still holding her hand when they reached the street. "Miss Michaud, I've just seen . . . Have you had supper?"

"No."

"Will you walk down to Tooler's with me and have some crabs? You must, really! I have to ask you . . ."

A little astonished laugh bubbled from her. "What's up?"

"You will come?"

"Un-hun." She made the sound of assent in the top of her throat with two descending notes that were curiously expressive of pleasure, like the cooing of a pigeon.

Then George Milligan walked from under the steps. His chin was on his chest. He saw them and straightened. "Nina." He cleared his throat. "Will you . . . can you have supper with me?"

"Sorry, George, I've just promised Mr. Corsey."

"Would you care to join us, Mr. Milligan?"

"Thanks." He shook his head and walked off rapidly.

John watched him go. "I'm sorry," he said. "He needs you to-night. He's just been through hell."

"Lost his job?"

"Oh, much worse!"

As they walked down Kernel Street to Tooler's he described the scene of which he had been the unintentional witness. "And then they danced," he concluded.

"Make a fine short story," Nina said. "Why don't you write it?"

He was shocked dumb by her comment and her question. He had expected her to cry out in sympathy for George Milligan, for the whole Milligan family.

"Why don't you?" she asked again.

"One can't write that sort of thing: a piece out of actual lives!"

She looked at him, astonished. "What else can you write?"

"Things you invent. I'd never use actual experiences."

"Then you'll never write a word worth reading." She passed through the door of Tooler's with a shrug that was as final in its discarding of him as if she had said in words that she had expected him to be interesting and had found him a naïve bore.

He followed her into the café. She was surveying the vacant tables. "Let's go upstairs," he said quickly. In the back of the café he had seen his uncle Drayton Greville.

For more than a hundred years Tooler's Fishhouse had served oysters, crabs, lobsters, and shad to the

gourmands of Chesterbridge. Washington had eaten Cape May salts at one of the twelve oak tables that filled the dark little café and Franklin had called often for soft shells. For a century there had been no addition to the dozen tables, but the last of the Toolers had cut a hole in the ceiling of the room and built a closed stair to the second floor. The walls of the upper room he had sheathed with pine logs, still wearing their bark, and decorated with fish. Huge shad, trout, mackerel, salmon, and bass stared glassily from plaques over a score of tables. At noon the upper room, like the room below, was thronged with lawyers, brokers, and merchants from the wholesale district which had engulfed the fishhouse, but in the evening the second floor was invariably deserted. The business men had returned to their suburban homes, Tooler's prices were too high for the poor of the district to the south and the dozen tables of the lower floor were more than enough to accommodate stragglers who had remained late at their offices.

Nina Michaud strode across the empty upper room to a table that stood by an open window, dropped into a chair, propped her elbows, and stared into the street. John took the chair which faced the door. A waiter appeared: three chins above a long white apron. John ordered Cherrystones, soft shells, asparagus, cantaloupe, and iced tea. Nina's chin was in her hands. There was a bracelet on her left arm: five jade lozenges held by small twining snakes in silver gilt. Her clay-stained fingers reached to the roots of her black hair. An aroma of coffee came from the warehouse across the street. John looked at her sullen mouth. "When will I get my picture?" he smiled.

"You won't, I guess. Probably cut up already. Won't bother you much, will it?" She was still looking out the window.

"I'd like—"

"Don't try to kid me, Mr. Corsey. You pulled father's leg enough to do you for one day."

"No, really I wasn't trying to make fun of him. It was the only way I could see to . . ."

"Play the gentleman bountiful."

"Not that!"

"Just that! Still, I don't mind. I guess I'm past pride when it comes to getting money for father. Anyhow, in a few years that picture won't be worth fifty dollars. It'll be worth five thousand."

"I don't doubt it."

"Liar!" she smiled.

"You just can't endure politeness, can you?"

"I like frankness better."

"Then . . . then tell me about George Milligan. You're in love with him?"

"Nope. I was."

"But he . . ."

"I can't help that."

The waiter brought the Cherrystones. They ate in silence.

"What are you writing?" she asked abruptly.

"Novel."

"What about?"

"Oh, American life and how it could be made finer."

"What's the plot?"

John twisted his napkin. "Oh, you don't want . . ."

"I do."

"No."

"Yes, go ahead."

"Well, it's the story of a young man who sees how America is falling more and more into the hands of middle-class politicians and crooked business men, like Roediger and Yenks, and starts a secret movement among all the gentlemen of the country to take over the government and run it in the interests of the people."

"But that's never happened."

"No, but it might—soon."

"Maybe. Go on."

"Well, there's a fine girl that he's in love with. She's

the daughter of a sort of a rotten Mark Hanna who controls everything. Of course at first she hates the hero and helps her father to fight him, but in the end she sees that he's right. That happens after he has seized the government and made himself dictator. He passes a lot of good laws: real civil service reform, a budget, tariff reduction, and parliamentary government like England's. Then they get married and go away together to the South Seas."

"Whew!" She was laughing.

A flush rose to the roots of John's hair. "I knew you'd . . ."

"But it isn't a novel. It's propaganda. There can't be a human being in it."

"They're human to me."

"Do you really think it's any good?"

"I did. It doesn't sound so good now that I tell it to you."

"Why don't you write something real, something about ordinary people living ordinary lives?"

"There doesn't seem to be much point in that. It doesn't get you anywhere."

"Why do you want to get anywhere? You're not writing moral tales for children. Maybe you want to do just that. La Fontaine?"

"No. I want to do short stories and novels."

"Then take anybody you know."

"For instance."

"The Milligans and that phonograph."

"I'd never . . ."

"Then your villains, Roediger and Yenks."

"They don't interest me."

"Roediger! Did you ever read *Le Rouge et le Noir*?"

"Yes. It's a great book."

"Can't you imagine that inside Roediger is just like Julien Sorel? Look how he started! Got his boss's daughter pregnant at a church picnic and wouldn't marry her till old Grey had given him a half-interest in the busi-

ness! And match up his Sunday-school class with his house on the Jersey coast, where any pretty salesgirl has to be willing to go if she wants to keep her job. He's real!"

"I couldn't write about him."

"Why not?"

"I wouldn't understand him. He's not my kind of a person."

"Isn't there anybody you do understand who's hit life hard?"

He shook his head. "Most people I know never . . . Yes, I can think of one person; but he's my uncle and I could never—"

"How do you expect to write? If you don't know people you can't write about them, and if you do know them you won't."

A pause. John was looking at his empty plate. "You're right," he said.

"No!" Her hand darted across the table. "I've really hurt you."

"You haven't." His eyes were still on his plate.

"Look here, Mr. Corsey: The second year I went to the Academy I got a prize. I brought my statue home and showed it to father. I thought it was great, thought I had Phidias and Michelangelo lashed to the mast. He happened to have a hammer handy. The remains of the statue went out with the morning slop."

"What did you do? Go back to the Academy?"

"No. The teachers have no guts. They were turning me into a little imitator of all the rotten literary things in Rodin. I worked on my own with father to criticize. I'm just beginning now to know what form is."

"Well, what's that mean for me? You think I'd better pulverize my novel? Burn it up?"

"Sure."

"I do think it's a fine idea. After all, there never has been a decent civilization that hasn't been imposed by a

few aristocrats, and I'd like to show how it could be done in the United States."

"Then quit writing and start your revolution. Back to the Bourbons! Fine slogan. Sure to make a hit in America!" She smiled and John laughed.

"I suppose I'd better stick to reporting murders for the *Times*," he said.

"No!"

"Why not? I can do that. And it's fairly obvious that I'm not made to be an author."

"How do you know? You've never tried."

"Well, you've made me see that the stuff I've written thus far has been mighty silly."

"Look here, Mr. Corsey: If you quit writing because I . . . I'd be so sore at myself . . . You know you've got the most important thing. I know you have it."

"What?"

"Feelings. And so an idea of other people's feelings. Otherwise you'd never have felt that performance of the Milligans the way you did. If you won't write that, write the next thing that hits you hard."

"One doesn't often encounter—"

"Not ready-made like that. But, good Lord, there are people with fine stories all around you all day. Look at father. Yes. That's it! Take father. You've seen him. I'll give you his story. Will you write it?"

"Wouldn't he mind?"

"He'd never see it. Never reads anything but the *Figaro*. If he did, he'd never recognize himself. You can change names and places and fire away."

"What happened to him?"

"Not much. Married my mother when they were kids. Paris, of course. She painted, too. She was beautiful and he worshiped her. Not love—worship. Looked up to her and all that. He had a little income from his family but he never sold a picture, so they couldn't keep a maid; and after I was born mother had no time to paint. She cared a lot about her work and she blamed father and

me for keeping her from it. Father blamed himself. Got more and more ashamed of himself. Began to take out on mother his disappointment with himself. Curse about the cooking, not because mother didn't cook well, but because he was ashamed she had to cook at all. He got pretty impossible to live with. Worked crazily. Kept mother posing six or eight hours a day. Sliced up his pictures if he heard a dog bark while he was working or if a chair or a table in his studio was moved. He had one friend, second violin at the Opera. Father tooted the flute a bit. They'd play together holidays. Mother and the friend began to fall in love. Not fast. Gradually. He'd sympathize with mother when father was in a tantrum. Father saw it coming. But he didn't lift a finger to stop it. Maybe you'll understand why. I don't."

"I think I do. Go on."

"One day I was playing in the street. I was about seven. Father came along carrying a canvas. He'd been to a dealer. Turned down again. I walked up to our rooms with him. There were mother and his friend standing, holding hands. They looked at him and didn't move. The three of them stood a long time, just looking. Then father walked up to mother and kissed her. Then he kissed his friend. Then he took my hand and we went out again. We walked all over Paris, so fast that most of the time I had to run. I got so tired that he had to take a cab to carry me home. Mother was gone.

"He sold everything and came to Chesterbridge. Some fool who'd studied at the Academy had told him that it was the Paris of America. Maybe it is. Paris of America! Critics still crazy about Whistler and Rosa Bonheur! Not a man who knows a Manet from a Monet! Nobody's even heard of Delacroix! You can imagine how they've liked father's work! He might as well be living in the Sahara."

"Why doesn't he go back to Paris? It's certainly the one place where he might be understood. And he must be terribly homesick just for the city."

"Because he can't bear to see his wife and his one friend living together."

"Does he still care?"

"Care! The one thing he still wants every day and every night is to be with them! He loves them!"

"He still loves *your* mother?"

"He'll never get over worshipping her. He'd love her no matter what she did. He's even sent her money when he didn't have a coat himself."

"But he's wonderful! He's really a Christian!"

"He's an ass!"

"Oh, no!"

"Yes. First, he should have kicked out his friend and walloped mother and made her behave. He wanted her."

"But don't you see, he couldn't bear to make them suffer."

"So he let them make him suffer. Let his life go smash. And he's worth a thousand like them. If he'd stayed in Paris, by this time he would have been . . . But he was weak, sentimental and—"

"I think he was magnificent."

"Look here, Mr. Corsey: They smashed his life and almost ended his work. He's a great artist. They're nothing. He should have squeezed them like paint tubes and thrown them away when he was done with them. Instead, he did the self-sacrifice act. That was silly enough. But then he should at least have had sense enough to cut them out of his life and to go on to another woman, or to a dozen; but he—"

"One can't make one's self stop caring."

"You damned well have to stop caring if the person you care about stands between you and life."

"I think it's glorious to have a love that goes right on in spite of anything."

"Look here, Mr. Corsey: if you love a person either you have that person, all of that person, or you cut him out; cut him out for good and go on. Otherwise you destroy yourself. Father's been mooning around for sixteen

years; worshipping mother as if he was in a seminary and she was the Virgin Mary. He's a genius; but he's been so sentimental, so weak that—"

"I won't write the story that way."

"Write it your own way. Make him a *petit jésus* if you want. . . . How old are you, anyhow?"

"Twenty-four. How old are you?"

"Twenty-two. You don't seem it." She finished her cantaloupe and stretched her arms above her head. There were little patches of wet under her armpits. She took a long breath of the warm, coffee-scented air. "Lord, it's hot!"

The waiter appeared in the doorway. John nodded to him and paid the bill. They walked down the stairs. The lower room was empty. As they crossed Kernel Street their shoes sank into the softened asphalt. No breeze stirred the limp leaves of the maples. The scorched grass of the square was blotched with negroes trying to sleep. They walked slowly to the house with the Adam fan-light.

"Lord, what a night!" She paused at the marble steps. "Nasty as a hot body you've been too long in bed with."

John laughed, a little embarrassed laugh. "You almost sound as if you knew what that was like."

"Of course I do." Her lids lifted. "Don't you?"

He shook his head.

"You . . . poor . . . kid!" Her fingers touched his forearm. She stared an instant, then hurried up the steps.

John walked home.

He felt his way into the library without switching on a light and stood a long time looking into the yard. The odor of the locust blossoms was heavy as oil. He walked up to his room. Spread on his bed were the evening clothes he had expected to wear at Mildred Ashley's dance.



"Good morning, mother," John crossed the Kingsale dining-room.

"Dear John! It seems months since you've been home." His mother dipped her fingers in a bowl, moistened and wiped her lips, and turned them up to him.

"Sorry about last Sunday. Simply couldn't get away from the office. Good morning, father. Hello, Eleanor." He took his seat and Pounder passed the silver fruit basket.

"I think they're pigs to work you so hard!" Eleanor Corsey's mouth quivered with sympathy as she looked at her brother. "Did they keep you too the night of Mildred's dance?"

"Yes, on a murder."

"You did miss it, Johnny! It was a wonderful dance. Everybody was there. Mildred asked me twice why you hadn't come. She said you hadn't been near her since she came back from France."

"I haven't had time."

"Never mind. You'll see her to-night. You will drive me to the Squirrel, won't you? It will be such fun cooking our own dinner."

"I'm sorry, Eleanor. I have to take the 6:45 to town."

"Nonsense, John!" Mrs. Corsey dropped the tongs into the sugar bowl with a little clatter. "You don't have to be at the *Times* till eleven to-morrow morning. And your father's counting on you to drive in with him. Here's your coffee."

"That makes no . . ." Dr. Corsey looked up from his newspaper.

"I'm sorry, but I really have to go to-night."

"But why on earth!"

"Well—you'll laugh; it is rather ridiculous—I'm having my portrait painted."

"Portrait painted!"

"Who's doing it?" Dr. Corsey smiled.

"No one you ever heard of. A Frenchman. Michaud."

"But why under heaven—" Mrs. Corsey began.

"Well, he's a fine old man and he needs work."

"That's a nice way to waste your time!"

"Is he able?" asked Dr. Corsey.

"I don't know. He's very individual. Crazy about form. Sees things almost in cubes."

"Can you imagine that, here?" Mrs. Corsey's smile included the two Gilbert Stuarts and the Trumbull which hung on the dining-room walls.

"No. I must say I can't. But still it's rather fun. The old man's a character, and now that I'm writing I ought to know as many—" He coughed, heavily.

"How long have you had that cold?" his mother pounced.

"About a week."

"You'll stay here to-night and take a good dose of calomel and I'll put you to bed early with a mustard plaster and a hot-water bag."

"Lord, mother, you might think I was five years old."

"You know as little about taking care of yourself as if you were three."

"I've got to go to town, but I promise you I'll go right to bed and let Pullen smear me with mustard and pile all the blankets in the house on me."

"And then you'll go and pose for three hours in a dirty, draughty studio. Where does your precious artist live?"

"Constitution Square."

"Oh, which house?" A tinge of respect had crept into Mrs. Corsey's voice.

"Fourteen."

"The Huntlys'! I remember so well. When I was a girl they always gave the Christmas Eve party. A tree in the dining-room and a magician in the back drawing-room and the floor of the front drawing-room covered with crash for dancing. Such a lovely house! Does he keep it up properly?"

"He lives very simply. He's quite eccentric." John coughed.

"When will the picture be done? When can we see it?" Eleanor's eager lips were quivering again,

"Lord knows! I've posed ten mornings now, eight to eleven; but he paints so slowly that—"

"I should think it would bore you to extinction!" Mrs. Corsey transferred three griddle cakes to her plate.

"It's not altogether fun. He's devilish hard to please. If one changes one's pose an inch . . . The first day I posed he'd made a model stand out of a chair balanced on a couple of boards stretched between two packing-cases. I'd been working late and after I'd sat absolutely still for about an hour I started to go to sleep. My head dropped over and the first thing I knew there was a crash and the chair and I and the boards and the packing-cases were all embracing one another on the floor. Then he jumped on me, screaming. I thought he was going to murder me with his palette knife. 'You scoundrel! You've spoiled the pose!' he yelled. 'I told you you had to sit as still as an apple! Does an apple move?'"

"He sounds delightful," Dr. Corsey chuckled.

"He is. You'd like him, if only as a specimen. I . . . I've even thought I might invite him to come out here for an evening. It's so hot in town and he has no place to—"

"Do."

"Randall! What on earth would we do with him? We couldn't invite any one to meet him."

"Drayton and Augusta." Dr. Corsey's eyes twinkled. "They always go well with freaks and strangers. And they're his neighbors."

"But what would one talk about? My dear, before he came I should have to spend sleepless nights reading Ruskin and Pennell!" Mrs. Corsey raised her hands in supplication.

"Food," said Dr. Corsey. "If he's French he probably takes as much interest in sauces as you do. He might even be able to teach Mary how to concoct a decent bouillabaisse."

"John, you don't really want me to have him, do you?"

"Of course I don't really care, mother, but . . . well, now that I'm writing I'll meet lots of rather unconven-

tional people who are nevertheless worth while, and I'd hate to think that I could never invite them to my home."

"Of course, John, of course I want you to feel that you can always have any one you want at your home. If you find him amusing, I'm sure I shall. Let's say next Sunday evening."

"Thanks. And don't bother to ask Aunt Augusta and Uncle Drayton. Just ourselves."

"Won't he think it odd if—"

"Not a bit. Give him a bottle of father's '78 Chamber-tin and he'll think he's in heaven."

"It's gone by a trifle," said Dr. Corsey. "If you think he really knows wines, I'll try him on the '71 Margaux, or the '89 Musigny."

"I suppose he does. And by the way, mother, I suppose you'll also have to invite his daughter."

"Isn't there a mother and a mother-in-law too?"

"Sorry. But she's not bad. Talks with a curious accent and uses strange language occasionally; but she's a very able person: she sculpts."

"She sounds appalling. As if she smoked cigars like Rosa Bonheur."

"Cigarettes, maybe, but I'm sure you'll like her: she's so intelligent and alive and straightforward."

Dr. Corsey looked sharply an instant at his son, then back at his paper.

"What's her name?" Mrs. Corsey rose wearily. "I've time to write her before church."

"Nina Michaud. But don't bother to write. I'll ask her myself."

"She wouldn't come on your invitation."

"Of course she would."

"I hope she's not that kind of a woman."

"Oh, mother!"

"Alice, dear!" Dr. Corsey seconded the protest.

"No, Randall! I insist on writing her. Other people may have no standards but we have ours. Will you go to church, dear?"

"Thanks, I think not. John's home so little now."

"Come, Eleanor." Mrs. Corsey moved toward the door, then stopped with a sigh. "Really the new rector is too boring. Forty-five minutes of sermon last Sunday. I do hope he'll take my little hint."

"You gave him one?"

"Just an indication. He said to me after the service that he'd noticed a certain restlessness and asked how long it was customary to preach at St. John's. I told him that of course his time was unlimited but that the oldest tradition of St. John's, dating from Washington, was that no souls were saved after the first ten minutes."

"Bully for you, Alice!"

She smiled out of the room.

"How's the novel?" Dr. Corsey turned to John.

"I've burned it up."

"No!"

"Yes. It was childish. But I've almost finished a short story that, I think, is really good."

"What about?"

"I'd rather not . . ."

"I quite understand."

"I'm going to send it to the *Century*."

"Would you care to have me write Gilder?"

"Oh, no! If it can't stand alone, I'd rather . . ."

"Quite." Dr. Corsey resumed his reading and John picked up the *New York Herald*.

Twice Dr. Corsey glanced at his son as if he were about to speak and turned back to the *Times* without speaking. Then he rose and stood looking at the Gilbert Stuart portrait of his great-grandfather. "Johnny," he said, his eyes still on the portrait, "there's something I've been meaning to say to you for a long time."

"What's up?"

"Nothing in particular but . . . well, you're grown now and you're the grandson of your grandfathers and . . . well, I just want to say that I hope you understand certain things. . . . If you ever get into any sort of trouble with

a woman, you can tell me all about it and I'll understand. . . . We've all been a bit like that. . . . And please understand that under no circumstances do you ever have to marry such a woman. Then . . ." He paused a long time. "There's no disease that can't be prevented or cured if you act quickly enough; and if you should happen . . . just come to me at once, will you?" His eyes were still on the portrait and the paper in his hand was trembling.

"Good Lord, father, you don't have to worry about me. I understand all about that sort of thing and I'd never—"

"Thanks, Johnny, I just . . . Would you care to play a round of golf before luncheon?"

"Fine! In about an hour?"

"Thanks. I'll go dress." Dr. Corsey left the room without looking at his son.

John rose and stood gazing out the window of the dining-room. The bays stepped past, spiritedly, drawing the victoria. The sunlight glinted on the silver crests which adorned their harness and blinkers: Out of a ducal coronet, an eagle displayed with two heads argent.

"John! Here's the note for Miss Michaud," his mother called.

"Hell!" He turned from the window and answered, "Coming, mother."



"Shall I bring the mustard at once, Mr. Johnny?"

"I'll ring. I want to work a bit first." John sat at the mahogany table which stood in the center of his room on the Square, sharpened a pencil and began to write. A far-off clock struck nine. He looked at the page he had written, ran his pencil through a sentence, examined the page again, crumpled it, dropped it in the scrap-basket, rose, and looked out at the Square. The night was still and cool, so still that though the breeze was slight the

rustle of the maple leaves was audible. A trolley creaked up Kernel Street. He sat again at the table but his pencil did not move. He stared a long time at the wall, shook his head resolutely, wrote half a sentence, threw down his pencil, rose again and looked over the Square toward Pleasant Street. The whimper of a bitch came from a near-by cellar. He walked to the back of the house and listened. The breeze was full of locust blossoms. A hansom rolled along Pleasant Street, the horse's feet klip-klopping musically on the asphalt. He walked to the front of the house and watched the hansom. It disappeared down Pleasant Street. He hurried downstairs, groped for his hat and followed the hansom.

Caruso's voice was pouring Celeste Aïda from the cellar of the house with the Adam fanlight; but there was no light on the fourth floor. John walked around the square. There was still no light. He hesitated; walked around the square again. There was still no light. He mounted quietly to the fourth floor and knocked. There was no answer. He walked slowly back to the street. "Lord, I'm tired!" He coughed and moved wearily toward a bench. A woman was striding fast across the square.

"Miss Michaud!"

"Hello, John! What are you doing here this time of night?"

"I—I just wanted to see you a moment. Mother wants you and your father to dine at Kingsale next Sunday." He handed her the invitation. "Would you care to?"

"Un-hun." She made the two descending notes.

"I'm afraid you'll be bored. Father and mother are interested in such different things than you and I but I hope . . . Do you think your father will come?"

"Not a chance."

"Then I'll drive you out and back. Just drop mother a line, will you?"

"Can't you tell her?"

"Yes, but I'd rather you'd—"

"All right. I'll do it in the morning if I don't forget. You haven't seen father, have you?"

"No. What's up?"

"He's been acting nutty all day. I'm afraid he's sick."

"Has he seen a doctor?"

"He won't, ever. Can't bear to let anybody touch him. I think he's run away to-night because he's afraid I've got a doctor waiting. I've looked every place. Can you—"

"Let's sit down here and watch for him."

They moved a bench under a maple.

"Nina, you will write mother, won't you?"

"I guess so."

"No, really, please. I don't want her to . . ."

"Think I'm a roughneck."

"Not that. But she is fearfully conventional and—"

"What do you care what she thinks of me?"

"I do care . . . a lot." His hand caught the bracelet which circled her left wrist. He pressed it into her arm.

A trolley creaked up Kernel Street. George Milligan hurried past without observing them. Neither spoke. Through a long time the breeze ran over the maple leaves raising delicate crescendos that rose and fell and rose again, unappeased.

A negro girl strolled by humming, "There'll be a hot time in the old town to-night." Their hands parted and John coughed.

"Got a rotten cold, haven't you? Where is it? Here?" Her fingers touched his throat.

"Trachea."

"What are you doing for it?"

"Nothing."

"I've got a fine French ointment. Better than mustard. Come up and I'll put it on with a wad of cotton."

"Thanks."

She crossed the street and walked upstairs ahead of him. He was groping for the banister when his hand touched her thigh.

She lighted a gas jet and disappeared into the darkness of the front room. "Take off your collar and open your shirt," she called.

Three times his fingers fumbled the knot of his cravat. She came back. She had taken off her hat.

The ointment smelt of menthol and eucalyptus. The fingers of her right hand slid down his throat, spreading it. Her left hand rose, wet with the unguent, and began to glide over his chest. Her bracelet caught on his shirt. "Take it off," she said.

He unclasped the bracelet. It grated in his palm.

She was standing close against him and her fingers were drawing slow strokes of wet down his throat to his chest. Slower and slower they moved, pressing deeper and deeper. . . . The bracelet rattled on the floor.

His hands were in her hair. She drew her head far back, her body bent back like a bow. "Do you really want . . . enough?"

"Nina!" His lips were in her open mouth.

A slow step was coming up the stair.

"God damn it! Father!" She staggered to the table, spread a broad roll of cotton and bent over it.

Her father entered. "Where the devil have you been, father?"

Michaud's eyes were frightened. "Just out. Just out. Ah, Mr. Corsey, come to see the portrait? I'm pretty well satisfied this far and if the day's clear gray we'll have a good sitting to-morrow." He peered out a window. Branching veins were beating in his forehead. "Plenty of cloud."

"You're not ill, are you, Mr. Michaud?"

"Not a bit. I've got a blood clot somewhere in my system but . . ." He sat down heavily. Nina finished adjusting the cotton on John's chest. "I see you're not well yourself, Mr. Corsey."

"Just a cold and Miss Michaud has been kind enough . . . Wouldn't you let me call a doctor, Mr. Michaud?"

"He'd feel me!" The old man shuddered. "Ugh!" He

lurched to the mantel, lighted a candle and walked to the front room.

"Come down. I'll wait," John whispered.

"Nina!" her father called.

Her fingers tightened an instant on John's arm and she disappeared into the shadows of the front room. His foot crunched the bracelet. He thrust it in his pocket and tip-toed downstairs.

He stood by the bench under the maple and looked up at the wavering candlelight behind the fourth-floor blinds. "Oh, how wonderful!" he said. Then George Milligan moved slowly from the basement and crossed to the square. John pressed close to the trunk of the maple. Milligan walked toward the bench. Abruptly John sat down.

"What are you doing here this time of night?" Milligan stared.

"Mr. Michaud's not well and I'm waiting to see if he needs a doctor. How are the examinations going?"

Milligan peered at him. "Mr. Corsey, you leave Nina alone."

"What do you mean?"

"You know damned well what I mean. You leave Nina alone."

"Don't you think you're a trifle impertinent?"

"I've got a good right to be."

"She'll be interested to know that."

"You've had supper with her every night for two weeks, Corsey. She's hardly spoken to me at all. And you've been there every morning."

"Michaud's doing my portrait."

"Blah, blah, blah!"

"Are you looking for a licking?"

"Want to try it?"

"I suggest that you get out of here and get out quick."

Milligan sat down on the bench.

John stared at him a long time, then lighted a Rameses. Milligan lighted a Sweet Caporal.

The clang of fire-engine gongs rose to the east and diminished westward. One by one the lights in the houses around the square disappeared. The trolleys ceased to creak up Kernel Street. The candle still cast a faint glow on the blinds of the fourth floor. The pathway in front of the bench was speckled with cigarette butts.

A policeman walked quickly across the square and rapped with his nightstick on the door to the Milligans' basement. George Milligan rose, and sat down again. The policeman entered the basement. Milligan's feet drummed the pathway. The policeman reappeared. Mrs. Milligan, her head wrapped in a shawl, followed him. George ran across the street.

"Oh. George! Mary's . . ."

The three figures hurried around the corner.

John blew a long breath, rose stiffly, stretched, and stared at the fourth floor. The candlelight was flickering. He drew Nina's bracelet from his pocket and ran his fingers slowly over the smooth nubs of jade. Suddenly the candle went out. He thrust the bracelet into his pocket and peered at the door of the house. The spat of a raindrop on a maple leaf made him jump. He turned up his collar and coughed. A slow rain began to sift through the maple. She did not come. He shivered and looked around the square. There was no light in any house. He walked quickly across the street. Tiptoe, he mounted the stairs. The door to the Michauds' rooms was closed. There was no sound. "Nina," he whispered. There was no answer. "Nina!"

He stood a long time, listening. A cat began to yowl in the back yard.

"Hell! She's gone to sleep!" He crept down the stairs and hurried up Pleasant Street.



Pullen was shaking him. "Wake up, Mr. Johnny!" He turned over. There was a bracelet in his left hand.

He thrust it under the pillow and sat up. "What time is it?"

"Seven and looks like a three days' rain. You'd better stay abed with that cold, Mr. Johnny."

"Put out my shooting boots and my raincoat and hurry up with breakfast."

"Yes, your Honor."

He dressed, swallowed a cup of coffee, walked downstairs and stood a moment watching the rain beat off the high white blossoms of the locust trees. Then his eyes fell from the locust blossoms to the satyr mask and the thick, wet grass. He smiled and the little finger of his left hand bent slowly down to the palm.

He walked to the front hall. Pullen helped him into his raincoat.

"Pullen, will you please see that the grass in the yard is cut at once and get a plumber to repair the fountain? I'd like it done to-day."

"Now, Mr. Johnny, be reasonable! You can't cut grass a day like this, and there ain't a plumber in town would—"

"You get it done!" He slammed the door, strode across the Square and sloshed down Pleasant Street.

When he knocked at the Michauds' door, there was no answer. He knocked again, sharply. There was no answer. Petulantly he twisted the knob and walked in.

From the sofa the soles of a pair of shoes faced him. Worn spots like brown oysters crossed them. A Navajo blanket, black, white, and red, was stretched over the wearer of the shoes.

"Mr. Michaud! Are you ill?" He bent over the sofa. There was no answer. "Nina!" He ran to the front room.

She was sitting in a low chair, her head in her hands.

"Nina!" He was on his knees beside her. His arms reached for her shoulders. She held him away from her, shook her head, and sat staring at the floor.

"Can't I do anything to help you?"

She sat a long time motionless.

"Answer me, Nina!"

"Do you know an undertaker?"

"Oh, Nina!"

"Will you get him?"

"Nina, I'm so sorry, so horribly sorry!"

"Oh please go away."



"Lend me your typewriter five minutes, will you, Corsey?" B. Archibald Slempp, star reporter, leaned over John's desk in the *Times* local room.

"Got a good story?"

"Nothing much; but it would have pleased old Schopenhauer." Mr. Slempp, who was paying alimony to two ex-wives, displayed his large white teeth.

"How?" John relinquished his chair.

"The lady dropping on her feet as usual and the man getting it in the neck. You know George Milligan: his sister."

"What happened to her?"

"She murdered a man last night and as a result got a couple of thousand dollars in cash and a legitimate father for the kid she was having."

"She's having a baby?"

Mr. Slempp poked a finger playfully into John's waistcoat and showed his teeth again. "You been after her, too?"

"Certainly not."

"I beg your pardon. No offense. Enough have. She's been on the town."

"But what happened?"

"She found she was in the family way and tried to make young Denny—son of the saloon man—marry her. He was at her room and they had some sort of a fight and it ended by her pushing him out the window and breaking his neck."

"Then she's up for manslaughter?"

"She's a woman, son. They rushed Denny to St. Agnes'

Hospital and got a priest; and God knows what the old man said to him, but Denny married Mary Milligan just before he croaked and told the police he'd slipped, she hadn't touched him. I got the truth from the doctor. Denny was a bright boy, in Fleishmann's real-estate office, and he'd just put six thousand dollars in a house in West Chesterbridge. So the Milligan girl gets a house and what he has in bank and a father for the kid—all because she broke his neck."

"How much of that are you going to write?"

"It's good for about four sticks. Fine sob stuff. Death-bed marriage. Childhood romance. Long engagement. Little home they'd planned together which he was not to enter. Terrible accident. A tear in every eye when I get through with it. And to-morrow Mrs. Denny, née Milligan, the pathetic little widow, will get forty-seven nut proposals of marriage. Did you ever read Schopenhauer on women?"



"You have to let me help you, Nina."

They were leaning over the rail of Kernel Street Bridge watching the black water flow under a streak of moonlight slowly to the sea. The edge of the western sky was still green with the end of the long day. Yard engines on both banks were puffing trees of fire-lighted smoke into the clear air.

"I don't want to take anything from you, John, ever."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't want things spoiled between us."

"I don't understand you. I don't understand you at all. You need money. I have it. Why won't you?"

"No."

"What have I done that's displeased you, Nina? These last three days you've been so far away from me that . . . What have I done?"

"Nothing, dear. You've been . . ." Her hand found his and pressed it. The Washington express drew a line of fleeing light along the water.

"Then why won't you let me help you? What are a few hundred dollars? Nothing! What difference can that make?"

"It wouldn't make any to me; but—"

"Then take it." His hand reached for his pocket.

"No. It might to you."

"Nina! Don't you believe in me at all? Don't you know . . . What do you think I am?"

She looked at him a long time.

"I don't quite know," she said.

"That's not fair, Nina!"

"Can't you understand, John? You're all I've got left. And so when anything that might . . . Oh, don't let's talk any longer. I'm so tired."

They walked in silence to the Square. "Let's rest a minute." She halted by a bench.

Three men were coming out of the near-by doorway of the Chesterbridge Club.

"Come over to the house," said John. "A glass of port will be good for you."

They moved slowly to the brownstone steps. "You be my prisoner," he smiled, and led her through the house to the bench under the lilacs by the wall. Water was trickling from the satyr's mouth into the marble basin between the locust trees.

"I'll get the port." He left her.

He was groping on the sideboard in the dining-room for the bulbed belly of the decanter when flute notes scurried through the silent house. Pullen was playing scales in his room on the fourth floor. John carried the decanter and a glass into the yard. "You'll like this." He crossed the grass. "My grandfather laid it down in—What's happened?"

Deep sobs, half choked, were tearing her. "What is it, Nina?"

"Stop him! Oh, stop him! Father used to . . ." She was shivering like a child frightened at night.

"Nina, my darling, my poor, poor baby!" He stroked

her hair and kissed her eyes and forehead with quick little passionless kisses; but she kept on moaning, "Stop him, John, stop him!" He ran up the four flights of stairs.

Pullen was stretched on his bed, legs protruding from his nightshirt, a bottle of beer by his elbow, his lips on the flute.

"Pat, please don't play any more to-night."

"Well, be the tarnel scamer!" the old man grinned, "I like that! What's the matter with me playin'? It was good enough for your grandfather. Many's the night—"

"Pat, I haven't time to talk. Just quit please and go to sleep. I'll explain to you to-morrow."

"Well, be the—"

John slammed the door and ran downstairs.

Her arm was on the back of the bench, her eyes buried in her elbow. At his touch she turned. "I'm sorry, John, so sorry; but—"

"Oh, Nina, I understand!"

"It's taken all the backbone out of me. He was so wonderful. I never realized. I've had him so long to look out for I can't . . . The middle of things is gone for me. Everything seems so empty I . . . And think of it! The greatest man of his century dead and no one caring, no one except the butcher and the grocer coming kicking on the door afraid their damned bills won't be paid! And if I sell his pictures now they'll be bought by students for secondhand canvas and painted over! I won't do it! The only thing he said to me was: 'I know it's impossible, Nina; but you have to make them understand.'" She was sobbing again. "I'd rather go—"

"Look here, Nina!" He caught her wrists and pressed them hard. "We're not going to have any more nonsense between us. I'm going to take care of you, no matter what you say. I'm going to lend you the money to send all his stuff to Paris. And I'm going to give you whatever you need for yourself. I suppose your mother will have his income now and you'll have nothing. All right."

He took her purse from the bench and thrust a handful of notes into it. "I'll see that you have everything you want. And if you want to go to Paris to see the dealers yourself, I'll give you the money to go."

"You'll . . ."

"God knows I don't want you to go. I want you here, now, but if you—"

"You mean you'd really send me?"

"Yes, if you . . ."

The moon crept over the roof of the house and whitened her face. Her tense lips lifted and her eyes became pools of black light. "I don't want to go!" She crumpled to him.

A breeze began to stir the locusts. His lips were in the hollow under her left ear. He drew her out of the moonlight to the dark turf by the water.



Pullen twitched open the window curtains and turned to the bed to awaken John. "For the love of . . ." He stared at the pillow, then tiptoed out of the room.



Pullen placed the breakfast tray on the center table, and stood looking at John.

"Well?" John looked up.

"You hadn't ought to have done that, Mr. Johnny!"

"What the devil do you mean?"

"You hadn't ought to have brought that girl into the house."

"It was just an accident that we happened to sleep here. It won't happen again. Now forget it, Pat. The lady who was here isn't the kind of person you think. She's a lady."

"Chesterbridge?"

"Yes."

"Does your mother know her?"

"No."

"Then she ain't a lady."

"Mother's invited her to dine to-morrow."

"You mean to say you're goin' to introduce your mistress to your mother?"

"She's not my mistress. We're lovers."

"Are you married?"

"No, of course not."

"Then she's your mistress. Callin' her by a fancy name won't make no difference. And you ought to keep her decent and respectable like in a place of her own, like your grandfather always did—in New York or way up High Street at the closest—Mr. Corsey wouldn't have thought of bringin' one of them women into his own house no more than he would have thought of marryin' one of them."

"Well, the lady who was here isn't that sort of woman and I am thinking of marrying her."

"Now, Mr. Johnny, don't you make a fool of yourself. You know you could never marry a girl you'd used that way. You'd never respect her. Look at your Uncle Drayton! He ain't drawed a happy breath since he married that German woman, and she was a lady to begin with. You'd not want a loose woman as mother for your children. Keep your girl and keep her generous, but keep her in her place; and that ain't in your mother's house."

"Clear out, Pat. And call me a hansom or I'll be late at the office."

"Excuse me, Mr. Johnny, but things have always been done right in this family and it turns me up to see you . . . You ain't really goin' to fool your mother and introduce that girl to her as if she was a decent woman?"

"That is none of your business, Pat. Go get the hansom!" He walked decisively to the bathroom. Then he nicked a long sliver out of his razor strop and cut himself three times while he was shaving.

Pullen knocked. "The hansom's waitin'." He handed John two letters.

"I'll be down in a minute." He dropped the letters on

his writing table and sat and stared a long time at the floor.

"Damn it! It was beautiful! She is wonderful!" He ripped open one of the letters.

Mr. and Mrs. Rockwell Ashley request the pleasure . . .

He picked up the second letter, looked at the writing on the envelope, then began to pace the room, running his right hand over and over his hair. Abruptly he stopped and opened the letter.

MY DARLING JOHNNY:

You must have had such a sad time when you went to have your portrait finished. Did you write the account in the *Times*? I thought I recognized your sympathetic style. It must be very sad for his daughter all alone. Do you think she would like to come out to Kingsale and spend the weekend so as to get away for a few days from the house where it happened? If you would like me to have her, will you give her the enclosed note.

I hope your cold is better. Try inhaling eucalyptus if it's not and be sure to keep warm at night. I think of you so often, my dearest, sick and all alone in the bed you were born in so many years ago and I wish you would come to Kingsale and let me take care of you. I expect such great things of you, my baby, and I miss you so much always.

Best, best love from your far too loving

MAMMY.

He stared from the letter to the note addressed to Nina Michaud.

Pullen knocked again. "The hansom's—"

"I'll be down in a minute!" He turned and looked over the Square. A maid was scouring the marble steps of his Uncle Fulke's house. "Damn it, after last night I oughtn't to introduce her to mother." Fulke and Drayton Greville walked down the white steps and crossed the Square. They were arguing angrily. Drayton Greville was lighting cigarettes and throwing them away after

four or five puffs. He looked ten years older than his immaculate elder brother. They disappeared down Pleasant Street.

"Mr. Johnny, it's past eleven."

"I'm coming!" His voice exploded shrilly. He turned away from the window.

"Uncle Drayton! That's what happens to you if you marry your mistress." He slumped into the chair by the writing table and his fingers held the note addressed to Nina as if they were about to tear it.

Pullen walked into the room. "Are you sick, Mr. Johnny?"

"Nonsense! I'll be down at once! Get out!" He dropped the note, rose unsteadily and moved to the mirror in the wardrobe door. As he adjusted his cravat, he examined his reflection. "You God-damned coward!" He covered his face with his hands. Then he shook his head as if he were coming up from a dive, walked to the table, thrust the note into his pocket, straightened his shoulders, and hurried downstairs.

The driver touched his hat. John gave Nina's address.

The hansom turned the corner at the foot of Pleasant Street and Nina's windows appeared above the maples. Then on the steps of his Uncle Drayton's house a thing obliterating, nightmarish, began to happen. Augusta Greville was clinging to her husband and his hand was rising to strike her. John flung open the doors of the hansom and leaped as his aunt screamed and fell on the steps.

"I never touched her! You saw I never touched her, John!" His uncle shouted. "Damn you, Augusta, get up! You'd do anything to make me look like a cad! Anything to make me ashamed!" He shook his wife. She lay limp. "Give me your cab, John. Damn you, Augusta, I'll never come back to you! High Street Station!" He jumped into the hansom. His wife sprang up. John caught her.

"Drayton!" The cab drove off.

She collapsed in an honest faint,

John dragged her into the drawing-room and flung water savagely into her face. She blinked. Then suddenly she sat up. "Where is he?"

"He's gone to the railroad station."

Her face crumpled into sobs.

"What on earth's the matter? Stop, Aunt Augusta!" She went on sobbing. He sat on the floor beside her and caught her hands. She wrenched away from him and stuffed her handkerchief into her mouth. Gradually she became quiet. Then she spread her palms in a gesture of despair.

"What's happened, Augusta?"

The whole of her broad pink face puckered to her mouth.

"It's the end of Drayton and me."

"But what?"

"He's going to buy a place at Huntington."

"But that's where his first wife lives."

"He said he wanted to be near . . . his children!" She jammed the handkerchief between her teeth and silence writhed through the room like a limed worm. John's right calf knotted in a cramp. He kicked. She did not stir. She was staring straight before her as if she were alone.

"The queer thing," she said, "is that when your life is smashed you don't see how you could have done any differently than you did. If you'd done differently it wouldn't have been you, would it?" She stared a long time at the floor. "Drayton!" she said. "That was Drayton Greville who drove off in that hansom. Drayton Greville! Four false teeth. Slightly bald. Bad breath from too much whisky and too many cigars. Drayton Greville, who despises himself and despises me and respects only . . . O God, kill me! I can't stand it!"

"Augusta!" He caught her shoulders.

"Don't you understand, John, what he was before he married me? He was beautiful. Glorious. The most gallant thing in America. And now . . ."

"Well, he's suffered. You've both suffered."

"Why? Why should we have suffered? He loved me and I worshiped him. And then a few people cut us. Yes. That's it. Cut him into little quivering bits. Cut his soul out. And put theirs into him. Made him accept their valuation of our love. Made him despise me because I'd loved him! John! I've given him two children, and still he . . ." Her hand covered her eyes. It fell limp into her lap. "Oh, well, there's nothing left for me now but to get out of his way." Her eyes flickered toward a small drawer in a sewing table. Then suddenly she got up and began to jump on her right foot and to beat her head with her right hand. "Funny! It's as if I had water in that ear," she said. "It's stone-deaf. That must have been where he hit me."

"He didn't touch you."

"I can still feel the blow! My face still throbs! Look!"

"He didn't touch you." John leaned close to her. There was a red mark on her cheek. "Lord, that's queer!"

"What?"

"There is a mark."

"I knew. Now, good-bye, John. Run along. I'm all right now; sorry you were bothered." She held out her hand and attempted to smile.

"I'd rather take you to your room, Aunt Augusta; you ought to lie down and have a doctor."

"Oh, I'm all right now, really, John. You'll be late at the office. Good-bye."

"No. I insist."

"No. Really, John, I don't want to go upstairs."

"Why not?"

Her eyes turned under his gaze. "Well, if you insist, I . . ." She took his arm.

As he helped her up the stairs the laughter of her two daughters came from the play room. She shivered.

He lowered her gently to her sofa and kissed her hand.

He walked slowly downstairs. But when he reached the door to the drawing-room he stopped, looked back-

ward an instant, then ran tiptoe to the sewing table. Under the bright spools in the little drawer was a bottle of triangular blue tablets. He thrust it into his pocket. It crackled the envelope addressed to Nina Michaud.

He ran the three blocks to his father's dispensary. Dr. Corsey was peering down the throat of a huge negro. "Father, please go to Aunt Augusta. Quick!"

His father stepped into a back room. John showed the bottle. "She was going to take this. Drayton has—"

"Good Lord!"

They hurried back to the old Greville house. Dr. Corsey entered. John paced the pavement. From the open windows of his aunt's bedroom stifled sobs beat down on him. His fingers twined and untwined. "You can't get away with it!" he said. "You can't! You kill the woman and you kill yourself!" The little finger of his left hand snapped down against the palm. He drew the note addressed to Nina Michaud from his pocket and tore it into tiny scraps and dropped them through the grating of a sewer.

Then he began to pant as if he had been running. He lurched through the swinging doors of the saloon which backed against the Grevilles' yard, slumped into a chair and called for a whisky.

Half an hour later he knocked at Nina's door.

She took him in her arms without a word. Then she drew away from him and stood holding him by the shoulders, "What's wrong, John? . . . You're not unhappy?"

"Lord, no, Nina! I've never been so happy in my life."

"What's happened? You seem strange: changed somehow."

"Of course I'm changed," he smiled. "I'm happy now. The first time in my life."

"Darling! How did you get off from the office so early?"

"I haven't been yet." He made a sound that was almost a laugh. "I went to sleep again."

"Baby!"

"No, wise man. I don't intend to do any more sleeping at night." He kissed her. "I've got to get along to the office now. I just couldn't help coming up to see you for a minute. I'll be back at about seven and we'll dine at Tooler's as usual, shall we?"

"Un-hun."

He kissed her again. "And by the way, Nina, I'm sorry, or rather mother is. She's ill."

"Not seriously?"

"Gallstones—not bad—slight attack—she often has them. But she won't be able to have the dinner Sunday night."

"I'm so sorry. I'll write her and send some flowers."

"Oh, don't bother, please. It's really nothing . . . imagination mostly and father doesn't like her to be fussed over when she . . . Don't bother, please." She peered an instant sharply at him. "*A tout à l'heure.*" He threw a kiss with his finger tips and went out. She stood looking at the closed door, a puzzled pucker between her heavy brows.



"I'd like to have this bracelet reproduced in gold and emeralds, Mr. Constable." He detached Nina's bracelet from his watch chain.

"A lovely old design, Mr. Corsey. Would it be indiscreet to ask if . . ."

"No. I'm not engaged. Just a present. And please don't mention the order to any of my family."

"Certainly, Mr. Corsey. You may rely . . ."

"What will it cost?"

"Cabochon emeralds—fairly good color—rather flawed but showy—eh?"

"Yes."

"Ummm—about twenty-five hundred dollars. I'll submit the stones to you and then—"

"When will you have them?"

"Day after to-morrow. I'll drop you a line."

"No. Don't, please. I'll call."

"As you prefer, Mr. Corsey. After you've chosen the stones about three weeks to complete the bracelet."

"Thanks. Good morning, Mr. Constable. And please be sure not to mention . . ."

"You may rely on me, Mr. Corsey."



"Damn it, wire again and no gate!" Tom Athyn reined his hunter to a walk.

"It's that slob Leather." John checked his gray. "He's wired his whole place because he couldn't get into the Hunt."

"There's a brush pile." Tom rose in his stirrups. "I'll hang a bit on the wire and we'll go over." He swung from his saddle.

"Not I," said John.

"Why not?"

"Too dangerous."

"It seems to me I remember you always do it if you're afraid," Tom grinned.

"Not any more."

"Who's the girl?"

"There isn't any."

"Don't lie to me, John! I've been watching you all morning. You've been as careful as if you were a bank president. And you look about three thousand per cent healthier and happier than you ever have. You must have found somebody." He remounted. John laughed.

"Well, I have."

"Good for you! What's her name?"

"That's not fair." They cantered slowly along the wire.

"Hell, John! You and I have done enough dirty things together ever since we were kids for you not to begin now to . . . Of course if it's somebody we both know, I don't—"

"You don't know her."

"Then spit it out. Happy, aren't you?"

"Never so happy in my life."

Another line of barbed wire checked them. The voices of the hounds were no longer audible.

"We might as well go home. We'll never see hounds again this morning." Tom reined his horse to a walk. "I'm having a mighty happy time myself, John, but it'll end differently than yours, I guess. When we get ready to have a kid, we'll be married."

"You don't mean it!"

"Yes."

"Congratulations! Who is it?"

"Just for your own ear: Mary Tunbridge. She's from Chicago and she's working in the Medical School, too. She's taken your old room."

"But do you really love her?"

"We've tried it three months and we're both mighty happy. She has money, too, so she'll be able to support me in a style to which I am thoroughly unaccustomed. I guess we'll marry in the end. Who's your girl?"

"French. A sculptress."

"Are you keeping her, or is she a lady?"

"A little of both."

"Then you're not thinking of marrying."

"I guess not. But honestly, Tom, she's the most wonderful person I've ever met. So strong and straightforward and passionate."

"Why don't you marry her, then? What more do you want?"

"Well . . . I suppose I don't quite respect her."

"Good Lord, John, are you still mooning around after Mildred Ashley?"

"I haven't spoken to her since she came back from England and I haven't even seen her till this morning. Did you see her take the first fence? She certainly can ride."

"Yes. She'd be lovely as somebody else's wife."

"What do you mean?"

"A man'd have to be a bonfire to keep her thawed out."

"I don't believe it. I think she's emotional as the devil; but she's got restraint."

"You might as well talk about a hot iceberg. If a woman's got anything inside it melts the covering quick enough."

"There is such a thing as self-control."

"There is also such a thing as having nothing to control. I never could see what made you so crazy about Mildred."

"Well, she is beautiful and I think she has the loveliest voice I ever heard."

"And you'd leave a girl like your sculptress for that?"

"No. Never. But I wish Nina had something of her . . . Well, it's this way: Mildred never has to say anything to make her worth listening to, just has to let her voice run. She never gets on one's nerves. Nina has to say mighty brilliant things to make you forget the slang she uses and the words she mispronounces."

"I'd swap all the accents in the world for a—"

"I guess I would, too."

"I guess you wouldn't. You'll never admit you love anybody except a girl who talks like your mother and goes to the Concourse. I don't say you ought to marry your Frenchwoman or even think of it. Anybody's a damn fool to marry unless there's a kid coming. But she's certainly making you mighty happy and you ought to be able to realize that you do love her. If she'd been cold enough never to let you near her, you'd think she was wonderful. You're damned near the kind of snob that despises a woman because she makes him happy."

"You're an ass, Tom!" John drove his heels into the flanks of the gray and jumped the wall which separated the meadow from the road. He had galloped a mile before he reined to a walk.

"By the way, John, I read your story in the *Century*."

Tom came alongside smiling conciliation. "It's a corker. Where did you get the idea?"

"Nina. And she's given me another, better one. I sold it last week to the *Atlantic*."

"That's wonderful! Pretty soon you'll be—"

"Tom: I don't want you to get the wrong idea of my relationship with Nina. She makes me happy, terribly happy. She's made me write stuff that seems to be really good. I can't imagine not having her. But I can't imagine her living a life in the society you and I have been born in. She doesn't know any of the people you and I know and wouldn't get along with them if she did know them. She's not our kind. I don't want to get into the sort of mess my Uncle Drayton's in. So I don't think of marriage. And she doesn't either, I'm sure. She's never said a word about it."

"What'll you do if she starts a kid?"

"She won't. We're careful."

"Which means she probably will. What *would* you do?"

"God knows."

They rode a minute in silence before John exclaimed: "Look at the morning glories on that fence with the pumpkins and the corn behind them. Lord, isn't life lovely, Tom!"

"I'll race you to the crossing."

They galloped down the frosty road.



Thanksgiving day. Noon. John knocked at Nina's door. There was no answer. He turned the knob, walked in, and whistled. The legs of a turkey protruded from a market basket on the table by the stove. He walked to the front room. She was standing, looking out a window.

"Hello, child. Why haven't you cooked the turkey?" She did not turn. "Nina! What's the matter?" He took her hand and leaned to kiss her. She turned her lips away. "What's the matter?"

She walked to the table by the stove and pointed to a tag on the turkey's leg: Spring Street Market.

"I don't understand," he said.

"Why do you always have to lie to me, as if I was a—"

"What do you mean, Nina?"

"I wanted to give you a dinner for once. Then you said you already had two turkeys a friend had shot in Virginia."

"They kept them both at Kingsale, so I bought. . . . What difference? The turkey's just as good."

She turned abruptly and dropped on the sofa, and her shoulders began to jerk.

"Nina!" He knelt beside her and stroked her hair. She shuddered. "Nina!" His arms caught her shoulders. She twisted away from him and drove her back against the wall. "What's wrong, Nina?"

"It's all wrong, John. Everything's wrong between us."

"Nina, darling, you're crazy!"

"I wish I was. I've been crazy but I'm sane now, and I've seen what I really mean to you."

"You mean everything in life, child."

She shook her head. "That's what you mean to me. And to you I'm nothing but . . ." Her left hand covered her eyes. "You know it! It's all gone wrong. It's too one-sided. You're all I've got. And I'm hardly a part of your life at all. Such a little part that you . . . You know the part of your life you really care about is at Kingsale and on your damned snobbish Square with all the people I don't even know!"

"You can, if you want."

"I don't want to know them. But I want you."

"Well, you certainly have me."

"One little part of you. I want you all. I want you to love me the way I love you."

"I do."

"You know that's a lie, John. You can't even say it as if it was true."

A pause. He shrugged. "There's no use my saying anything if you . . ."

"Oh, John, I know you love me some. You've got a passion for me. But I'm just a convenience to you."

"Nina!"

"Yes. That's true. You haven't any intention to make things last between us. You're not trying to make me a part of your life or to become a part of mine. You don't even want people to know we're lovers."

"You certainly don't, do you?"

"Yes."

His eyes leaned under the pressure of her gaze.

"Don't be silly, child. A scandal's a lot harder on a woman than on a man. Nobody knows now that—"

"Everybody knows."

"What do you mean?"

"The Milligans. All the crowd I used to go around with in the evenings that I never see any more."

"Oh, they don't count. They don't know anybody."

Her eyes narrowed and her mouth drew to its most sullen line. "Now you've said yourself all that I've tried to say. Those people are the only ones beside you that do count in my life, but they don't exist for you. Why? Because our lives are just as far apart as if we'd never met."

"Nina, how can you . . ." He reached for her hand and she drew it away.

"I say it because I want to get things straight between us. I want to go on loving you. And, you don't know, John, but you can kill any love that ever existed just by—"

"Don't say such things, child. I can't imagine life without you. Not for one day."

"Any shopgirl would do you just as well."

"That's not true, Nina!"

"Maybe it's not quite true. It's not. We do fit each other. You don't know how well because you've never tried another woman. I know. And I want to keep you,

John, always. But if you go on making compartments in your life and locking me out of most of them I won't be able to go on loving you. Can't you see?"

"I can't see why you love me at all."

She reached for his hand and drew him to the sofa. "Oh, John darling, don't you understand? You've got the loveliest thing inside you. But it's almost been killed by the damned snobs you've always lived with. Maybe it's already past keeping alive. I don't know. But I do know it won't last long unless you can get out of Chesterbridge and out of thinking it's important whether or not a person goes to the Concourse."

A pause. His eyes were on the floor.

"I'm going to Paris," she said.

Slowly he looked up at her. His eyes leaned again. A cold silence stretched between them.

"What—what would we do there?" he said.

"You'd write and I'd sculpt."

"How would that be any different than now in Chesterbridge?"

"We'd live together openly, not sneak, not conceal, not have to listen for people knocking on the door, not have to leave each other every night just when everything is so lovely."

"We couldn't do that in Paris any more than here unless we were married."

"Look here, John. You get that out of your head once and for all. I'm not trying to make you marry me. I don't want to marry you. If I was having a child and you wanted to, I might. Not otherwise. If we go to Paris, we won't be living on the Boulevard Saint-Germain. We'll be seeing nobody but artists and authors and musicians who don't give a damn. And after a year we'll know mighty well whether we want to have a child and get married or not."

A pause. She released his hand. A ray of sunlight glinted on the gold and emerald bracelet that hung from her wrist.

"It sounds very attractive, Nina, but it's a pretty big proposition to decide all at once. I'd hate to leave the *Times* just now. They've offered to make me assistant editor the first of the year and my brother Ted's wife has just inherited the majority of the stock and that means I'll certainly be editor-in-chief in a few years. And that's a pretty fine position and I don't know yet whether or not I can write. And I don't want to leave mother and father and all the life here in Chesterbridge."

"What on earth can you like in Chesterbridge?"

"Everything. It's certainly the only place to live in America."

"Why live in America?"

"Oh, come on, Nina, don't be silly! There's no place else to live but England. And Chesterbridge has everything that the best life in England has. Fine hunting. Loads of nice, well-bred people. And I have a position here that I couldn't have in England unless my father were the Duke of Norfolk. I don't want to throw away—"

"All right. I guess we don't need to talk any more." She rose. Her lips were quivering. "Let's go and have lunch at Tooler's," she smiled. Then suddenly her hands were around his neck and she was covering his eyes and his lips and his throat with desperate sobbing kisses.



"Oh, lie still!" She pressed his lips into her breast.

Dusk slowly darkened the room. He stirred again. Her fingers pressed his head.

"I have to go, Nina. I'm so sorry. I can't stay any longer. I've got to get the six o'clock to Kingsale."

She withered away from him. Her forehead bumped the wall.

"Don't, Nina! You know I don't want to go. But I can't miss Thanksgiving dinner."

She did not answer but her body stiffened. He looked

at her a moment, then groped for his clothing and dressed.

"Nina!" He bent over her. She still lay rigid by the wall. "Nina! Please say you know how much I care." She did not stir. "Nina! It's not fair. I can't go until you answer me. . . . Why do you have to act like this when we've just been so happy?"

"Would you rather I was glad you're leaving me?"

"Oh, darling, you're so unfair!" He kissed her cold lips, drew the Navajo blanket over her, and left her rigid in the dark.

As he passed his Uncle Drayton's house he nodded and spoke. "She wants to marry me."

"What you say, boss?" a negro with a plucked turkey under his arm answered him.

"Nothing, nothing!" He hurried through the smells of lower Pleasant Street, eyes on the pavement, his lips moving in imaginary conversation.

He crossed his own Square. Warm yellow windows brightened the darkness above the blue of marble steps. The brougham was waiting to take him to the railroad station. The light of a street lamp gleamed on the silver crests which adorned the shining leather blankets of the bays. He stopped and looked around the Square.

"I'm damned if I'll marry her!" He hurried to the brownstone steps.



Their knees were touching under the table in Tooler's upper room and they were not talking; but when the white apron of the waiter appeared in the doorway John quickly tilted his chair back and began to speak. "I'm glad you like the idea. I'll get to work on it to-night. And by the way, have you heard about Mary Milligan's accident? Street car she was in hit a coal wagon and she lost her baby. Shame. Don't you think we might have a Christmas tree for the Milligan kids?"

The waiter deposited two hot slices of mince pie and left.

"Darling!" He caught Nina's hand and kissed it. "Why do we always have to be interrupted!"

"We don't." The corners of her lips lifted. "Will you really be free from the office Friday, Saturday, and Sunday?"

"Yes."

She smiled as if she had a secret, opened her bag, and put two railroad tickets to New York and four theater tickets on the table.

"You—" he began.

"And I've ordered a double room and bath at the Brevoort for Mr. and Mrs. James Corder."

"Sweetheart!" He kissed her hand again, but a trifle less spontaneously. "However, I'm afraid we won't be able to go over till Saturday noon. We can return the Friday tickets."

"Why?" Her smile congealed.

"Well, Friday night is the Concourse: Eleanor's first and I can't—"

Her mouth turned into her closed right hand.

"Don't, Nina! Can't you understand? It's an engagement that I've had ever since Eleanor was born. Her first Concourse. I have to go. She'd be so hurt and all the family would ask such questions that—"

Her trembling silence checked him. She was two searching black eyes and a mouth like a crushed plum hanging open under them.

The voice of a waiter calling an order in the room below came up the stair: "Adam and Eve on a raft."

"Nina! Think what it means to Eleanor. It's the beginning of her life."

Her lids were not closing and her eyes were like black cats stalking his thoughts.

"Nina! Say you understand."

Her mouth quivered ever so little.

"Nina!"

"I understand," she said, and her right hand moved across the table. His moved to cover it. But her fingers gathered the tickets. One stuck to the table. She raised it with a clay-stained nail. Then she tore the tickets as if she were very tired and dropped them on the floor.

She rose and walked to the stair. He gathered the torn tickets and followed her. She walked into the street. He paid the waiter and ran after her. Soft snow was filling the street with cones of swirling light. He walked beside her. But he had nothing to say. In silence they crossed the snow-padded square. She walked up the marble steps. He followed her. She turned.

"You will let me come in, Nina!"

She shook her head.

"I have to make you understand."

"Not again, to-night." She caught the words with her teeth as they crossed her lips.

"But you will go with me to-morrow morning to buy the Christmas things for the Milligan kids?"

She was two black eyes and a crushed mouth hanging open under them.

He moved to kiss her lips. He kissed the corner of her averted jaw.



"It's such fun, Nina. I feel as if I were a kid again." John hoisted an ungainly package above the heads of the children chattering and whispering around the Santa Claus in Roediger's toy department. "Now for the tree!"

"First I'd like to get a pair of gloves for Mary."

"How is she?"

"Smashed. As done as if the baby had been born. I guess you do care as much after it's kicked two months inside you."

They crossed a current of shoppers to the glove department. Nina pushed to the counter. John stepped back and lowered the package to the floor.

"Charge and send to Mrs. Corsey." His mother's per-

fect voice sounded behind him and instinctively he turned.

"Why, John!" she laughed nervously. "You've caught me! Positively I feel quite guilty. But really there's no place else for servants' liveries and Pounder must have a new . . ." He was aware that Nina had turned and that her eyes were on him and that she had stopped breathing. ". . . and really, Roediger's white gloves are the only ones in town one can clean and Eleanor needs so many. But you're guilty, too!" She shook a playful finger at him. "What are you doing?"

"Well, it's Christmas, mother."

"Don't you buy me another expensive present or I'll send it back!" She took his arm and pressed his hand. "Oh, John dear, do let's go over to the toy department and listen to the children talking to Santa. What an imp you were when we used to—"

"I only have a minute, mother!" he said loudly as they walked away from Nina.

The current of shoppers swept them down the aisle which separated gloves from toys. He turned his head. Between a derby and a black ostrich plume he saw Nina's eyes.

"Do look at that lovely doll, John!"

"Mother, you won't mind if I leave you. I'm late already at the office."

"What's the matter, John? You're trembling! Are you ill?" She whipped off a glove and felt his forehead.

"You've a fever!"

"Nonsense, mother! Don't be silly!" he wrenched away from her.

"John!" She bit her lip and tears came into her eyes. He bolted.

Nina had disappeared.

He shouldered the package of toys and plowed through protests to the street. He ran a block and a half toward the house where Nina lived. Then he stopped and stood

shivering. A street car crashed up Kernel Street. He plunged into it.

"What the hell you tryin' to do, kill yourself?" The conductor dragged him aboard.

He ran up to his room and locked the door.

"What am I? Christ, what am I?" He fell on his bed.

He lay a long time, face pressed into the bedspread. Then he sat up. The little finger of his left hand snapped down against his palm. He rose, washed his face, and brushed his hair. The voices of his mother and Eleanor came up from the dining-room. He crept down the back stairs and out the yard gate. Ten minutes later he knocked at Nina's door.

"Come in," she said.

When she saw him she turned her head away. He closed the door and walked to the middle of the room.

"Nina," he said, "will you marry me?"

She did not turn or answer.

"Nina! You have to answer me. *Will you marry me?*"

She turned and looked at him.

"Nina! Will you go now and marry me?"

"How can I?"

"Can't you forgive me? Oh, Christ, I'm so ashamed!"

She did not answer.

"Nina, you'll destroy me if you won't forgive me now!"

She did not answer.

"Nina! You have to answer me! You know you love me! Why can't you say you'll marry me?"

"You know why."

"Oh, what can I do more to make you! I can't say more than 'Marry me'!"

"You might have said once that you loved me."

"But I have a thousand times, Nina. And I do love you."

"No. But maybe some day you will."

"I do, Nina. I do now!" He lurched at her. She held him off and turned her lips away.

"Oh, Nina!" He began to sob.

She did not stir or speak till he was quiet.

"Now go away, please, John."

His eyes widened and his mouth hung agape, twitching.

"You poor kid!" She lifted her hands to his head and kissed his forehead.

"Nina!" He gulped and crumpled at her blindly.

She stepped aside and his head bumped the kitchen table.

She was two black eyes enormous with regret.

"Nina! You'll destroy me if you won't forgive me now!"

"I'll destroy myself if I do."

His hands covered his face and he went out.



It was seven o'clock in the morning when he knocked again at Nina's door and he had not slept.

"That you, George?" a strange voice called. He knocked again. The door opened and Mary Milligan's head appeared.

"Where's Nina?"

"She's left."

"Gone out already?"

"No, she left last night. Didn't you know she was going?"

"How do you mean, left?"

"Gone. Left town."

"When's she coming back?"

"She ain't. She gave me her furniture and the rooms for the month she's paid rent. I've had trouble, you know."

"Yes, I know. I was so sorry to hear. I do hope you'll have better luck now. But Nina? Where's she gone?"

"She didn't leave no address."

"But where'd she go? New York?"

"I don't know, Mr. Corsey, and I guess she'd have told you if she'd wanted you to know."

"Look here, Miss Milligan—"

"Mrs. Denny."

"You do know her address, Mrs. Denny, you must know it."

"I don't; but if I did, I wouldn't give it to you."

"Why not?"

"You took her away from George and then you threw her over."

"That's not true. I swear that's not true."

"I saw her yesterday after you'd gone."

"She never said that."

"She didn't say nothing. I saw her."

"You mean she was unhappy?"

"Quit kiddin', Mr. Corsey. You know how she was."

"I swear to you I don't. And I don't believe she's gone."

"Come in and look if you want."

He walked to the front room. Her sculptor's tools were gone, and the French wicker trunk was no longer in the corner by the window.

"But, Mrs. Denny, didn't she leave any word for *me*?"

She shook her head.

"But how'd she get the money to go? She didn't have a cent."

"She had a bracelet that I guess you know about."

"You mean she sold that?"

"Hocked it, I guess."

He began to laugh.

"What's so funny?"

"Nothing. Nothing. Good Lord! I'm sorry I disturbed you, Mrs. Denny. Do you really think she pawned that?"

"It was hers, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Yes. Oh, yes. Good Lord! Good-bye. Thank you, Mrs. Denny. Thank you."

He ran downstairs.



Mr. I. Astor raised the blinds of his pawnshop and opened the door. John entered.

"Vat you got?" Mr. Astor's trachomatous lids blinked.

"I don't want to pawn anything. I want to know if yesterday a lady pawned a bracelet like this one." He drew his watch chain from his waistcoat pocket. At the end of it dangled Nina's jade and silver bracelet. "Only gold and emeralds instead of . . ."

Mr. Astor held the bracelet against his ghetto nose.

"I don't speak of the affairs of my customers." He dropped the bracelet into John's palm and turned his back.

"You tell me, and tell me damned quick, or I'll have the police here in . . ."

"Did she steal it?"

"No. But if you've got it, just you let me have a look at it and I'll give you five dollars."

The pawnbroker shuffled back of the counter and suddenly John was looking at a pistol.

"Keep your hends up till I get the police! Yetta! Yetta!" he shouted. An old woman grew out of the inner darkness. "Police, Yetta!"

"Don't be an ass or you'll get into a fine lot of trouble! I'm John Corsey."

"Just like I'm Mr. Astor."

"Here's my card." John reached for his hip pocket.

"Hends up or I'll—"

John's hands shot up and he laughed. "Then let your wife take my pocketbook."

The fingers of the old woman fumbled in his trousers.

"It's on his card, Isaac."

"Cards is easy printed."

"He's got a police card, too. And an invitation to the C-o-n-c-o-u-r-s-e."

"Oh, Mr. Corsey! You'll excuse me, Mr. Corsey, I'd never have! Oh, Mr. Corsey, you'll excuse—"

"If you'll stop pawing me and show me that bracelet damned quick if you've got it."

"Yetta! Show Mr. Corsey a chair! Vun minute, Mr. Corsey!" He dived into the inner darkness and returned with the bracelet. John looked at it.

"Thanks. Good-bye." He hurried out of the pawnshop. There was an iron awning pole at the edge of the sidewalk. He caught it and clung to it as if he were drunk. "She's gone—really gone!" His throat contracting expelled a sound like a laugh.



The customary row of gentlemen wearing derbies and silk hats occupied the customary row of chairs by the front windows of the Chesterbridge Club. John entered. His Uncle Fulke was arguing with John Collingwood: "There's never been a Burgundy to compare with 1870 Chambertin." "My dear Fulke, the Clos Vougeot of '74 possessed a bouquet that . . ." He walked downstairs to the bar. A dozen young men were sipping the '82 Sherry that the Club had laid down in quantity at the behest of his grandfather. Tom Athyn hailed him and they went up to lunch together.

They were finishing their coffee when John yawned.

"That's the third time, John. Didn't you get any sleep last night?"

"No."

Tom raised his eyebrows. "Row with your girl?"

"Yes."

"What's happened?"

"It's all over."

"You've quit her?"

"She's quit me."

"You don't seem exactly broken-hearted."

"I'm not. I'm mostly just perplexed. I've been terribly ashamed and sorry and still, I don't know why, really I feel rather relieved."

"You never did like being happy."

"It's not that, you poor fool; but, well, it was always on the wrong basis."

"It sounded ideal to me."

"No. It was wrong. It wasn't one thing or the other. I didn't respect her enough to want to marry her and I respected her too much to treat her like an ordinary mistress. So I always felt uncomfortable. Not straight. Sort of mean and dirty. If we'd got engaged I'd have felt as if I had a ball and chain around my neck for life. But, my God, she made me happy! And the curious thing is that because she went away I respect her now, absolutely, completely. And I feel as if a whole part of me had gone with her. And still . . . well, I guess I'm really glad it's over."

"I hope you're able to say that in about two weeks. . . . Hell, John, any man with your sense of sin had better stick to what he's got."

"Not if he doesn't feel right about it."

"You'll never let yourself feel right about anything short of marriage with a girl your mother approves of. And you'll want her to be a virgin nymphomaniac. Unfortunately they don't exist."

"Tom, you're beginning to talk like a hospital orderly." John pushed back his chair and rose.

"I'm studying physiology."

They strolled to the front room. A fresh assortment of silk hats and derbies rose above the backs of the chairs by the windows. "Under those circumstances perhaps cold chicken is to be preferred to cold duck; but of course the chicken must have been broiled, not roasted." "To the Club! Never! My dear man, he's as common as a Vanderbilt. I dined with him once and he served Corton with salmon!"

They took their hats and walked out of the Club. "I think I'll stop at Norman's and get some white orchids for Eleanor," said John.

"Garlands for the unblemished heifer. It's her first Concourse, isn't it?"

"Tom, you're getting to be a swine. I'm damned if I want to see you any more if you—"

"I withdraw the heifer. But she is being led to the matrimonial block, isn't she?"

"You'd better move to New York, Tom. You're becoming too tough for Chesterbridge."

"Not too tough. Too bored. God, how Chesterbridge bores me!"

"Bores you? Chesterbridge!"

"Doesn't it bore you?"

John laughed. "That never occurred to me. It's like saying you're bored with breathing."



"My dear, even conscience is soluble in alcohol!" With a sweep of her eye Mrs. Corsey plucked the ladies who sat at her table in the supper room of the Concourse and carried them toward the branching staircase which led to the ballroom. John followed, but as he passed a small table where a girl sat with five men he stopped. The girl's blond head was clasped by a bandeau of carved coral. Her eyebrows were black and her mouth was a scarlet thread. The softly brilliant color of the bandeau was repeated in her velvet gown, at the left side of which glowed a coral buckle holding strands of the beads in varying tints of red and pink. Her long pale fingers were tangling the swaying strands. She sipped a bit of coffee before she admitted her awareness of John's gaze and glanced up.

"Lord, Mildred, you're amazing-looking!"

"Have you just discovered that?" The thin thread of her lips divided.

"No, but I seem to have rediscovered it."

"It's about time. I've been home three months and you've not been near me."

"*Mea culpa*. Will you dance?"

"The next's mine!" an English voice drawled through an adenoidal nose.

"Of course, Gerald. Mr. Corsey: Lord Exmoor. You can cut in, John."

"Pistols in the Park at seven if you do," the Englishman grinned.

"Inadequate," said John. "I'd face Gatling guns for a dance with Mildred."

He strolled up the broad, red-carpeted stairway to the ballroom. John Collingwood was drawing on a fresh pair of white gloves.

"Who's Exmoor?" John asked.

"The usual Englishman anxious to rehabilitate the family estates. I believe he's visiting the Ashleys."

"He'd have done better to have visited the Roedigers. Mildred's not that kind." John pushed through the press of men at the ballroom door. Eleanor Corsey whirled past in the arms of Wayne Sinclair: a tall youth whose black hair and eyes gave a romantic pallor to his thin, ivory cheeks. Eleanor's eyes danced into John's, vibrant with eagerness to communicate her ecstasy. He smiled at her, then absent-mindedly reached for his watch. His fingers struck a lump in his waistcoat pocket. He turned his back to the dancers. An elbow drove into his right kidney and Exmoor stalked past making way for Mildred Ashley. A little rent spread on the back of John's left glove. He stood a moment, hesitant, jostled by the dancers coming up from supper. Then he pursued a coral blur to a far corner of the ballroom.

They waltzed a minute in silence before Mildred's voice flowered out of the odor of *muguet* which floated below his chin. "I almost didn't let you, John. Gerald's insulted every time any one—"

"It's a good thing you did."

"For you or me?"

"Both. I'd never have spoken to you again."

"Dear me, we are violent this evening, aren't we!"

"It makes me sick to see you with that bounder."

"Boulder, of course. He only dates from the sixteen hundreds and you are—"

"You know he's just a fortune hunter, Mildred, and you ought to . . ."

"Yes, father, what ought Mildred to do?"

"You ought to leave him to the daughters of Roediger and Fillender and Yenks."

"Not I! He has a place in Norfolk, right next Sandringham, and a prodigious house in Grosvenor Square and a divine grouse moor. What better have you to suggest, Mr. Corsey?"

"Everything."

"Is that a proposal?"

"Good God, no!"

She drew back her long neck and laughed at him. "And yet you did love me once, John."

"That was before I knew you very well."

"Did you ever know me very well?" Her lids slanted until her eyes were like scratched beads of lapis lazuli.

"Yes."

"When?"

"When you danced an Easter Cotillon with Howard Roediger that you had with me."

"And but for that we might now have little Johns and Mildreds of our own dancing Easter Cotillons at Steinway's. Ah, me!"

"Never," said John. "You're too cold."

"I am?" In her laugh there was a faint uncertainty.

An angry English voice sounded behind him, "Mildred, may I?" and she danced out of his arms and into Exmoor's.

John walked down to the supper room. He was finishing his third glass of Veuve Cliquot when his father appeared.

"Father, would you mind looking out for mother and Eleanor? I'm very tired and I want to go home."

"Not much trouble looking out for Eleanor, is it?" Dr. Corsey beamed. "She seems to be as popular as your mother used to be."

"Is," John smiled.

"I stand corrected." His father lifted a glass of champagne to him.

"Thanks. Good night, sir. Nice music, isn't it?"

"Take the brougham."

"Thanks. I'll walk."

He humped into his fur coat, took his hat and stick, and hurried into the snowy night. But he did not turn toward his home. He walked down Pleasant Street.

There was no light on any floor of the house where Nina had lived. He walked home.



Hounds had found in Cornwall wood and run straight through Green Tree valley: a three-mile gallop and the fox sighted: then Leather's barbed-wire fencing.

John turned his gray's nose to the barbs: "Do you see it, Peterkin?" He rode back ten yards, wheeled the gray and cantered hard at the wire.

"Don't, John!" Mildred Ashley's voice cut through the rumble of male warnings.

A crash.



"Oh, dear, John! You're such a fool!" Mildred Ashley's face was fading in and out of a yellow background and her eyes were shining like wet paint.

"Where?"

"Leather's house. Don't talk. I'll tell them you've—"

"No, don't go." He held her hand tight. "Was Peterkin?"

"Leg. Oh, why did you, John?"

"I don't know. . . . Oh, maybe I do, but you couldn't understand."

"I do!" She raised his watch from the bed. The jade and silver bracelet dangled at the end of the chain.

"Yes," he said.

She threw down the watch. "I hate her, whoever she is."

"Oh, no! It's all over and it was my fault."

"It couldn't have been your fault."

"It was. I never could care for her altogether, the way I could for you . . . for a girl like you."

"Then why do you?"

"I don't know. I miss so not having her."

"You did love her . . . I mean . . . completely?"

"That's why I said you couldn't understand."

"I can."

"But you've never . . ."

"No." Her eyes fell.

"You poor kid!" He patted her hand. Then he laughed.

"Why are you laughing?"

"I don't know. It's just funny I should use that phrase, I should say 'You poor kid!' to you."

"I don't see why it's funny."

"You're an angel!" He drew her hand to his lips.

The door opened abruptly and a doctor entered.



"Father and mother home yet?" John stamped the snow off his pumps while Pullen took Mildred Ashley's ermine cape.

"Not yet, sir. A telegram for you, Miss Ashley."

She ran a finger under the flap of the envelope.

"Pater's gout must be portier than ever," she said.

"They're staying another week at Hot Springs."

"Bully! You'll stay on with us. Pat, bring the white port and some fruit. Now play the andante of the Fifth." He drew back a curtain and she walked into the music room.

"Dear John, I'm not the Boston Symphony."

"Hammer out the motif at least."

She seated herself on the yellow brocade piano stool and chafed her long fingers. "Not after the orchestra. Something easier."

"Chopin then."

"What?"

"The 'Etude in E.'"

She played and he watched her face. Her fingers released the last chord.

"Lord, Mildred, when you play you're just divine. You're like a white lily."

"The seraphical St. Cecilia," she smiled. "No, that was Theresa, wasn't it?"

"I mean it. When you play there's something positively unearthly about you. When you listen to music, too. To-night, coming up out of that black dress, you were smoother than any note that Nordica made. You were like a shaft of ivory light."

"You ought to turn from prose to poetry, John."

"You know it's true. You're as smooth as new snow. You've got something I don't even understand: a real poise. You're never out of hand. You're like a cello that the real you can play on."

"I'm not, but it's nice you think so."

He moved to the piano. "Mildred, you're not going back to England in May?"

She struck the last six chords of "God Save the King." "London for the season, then Cowes, then the moors."

"Damn it, you can't go!"

"Why not?"

"I'll—we'll all miss you too much. Yes, I'll miss you too much. Why do you want to go abroad again?"

"One's always looking."

"For what?"

"Something just around the corner that one never meets."

"Why should you meet it any more in London than in Chesterbridge? Exmoor?"

"I haven't. I'll try Rome or Cairo or Constantinople next."

"Don't you remember De Maupassant's story of the letters in the desk? You'll more likely find it at home."

"In Chesterbridge!"

"Why not in Chesterbridge?"

"Because here there's never any one violent or unexpected."

"You like violence?"

"What woman doesn't?"

"I don't know. I don't know anything about women."

"Some day you'll discover that most of them want to be carried off by some one large and brigandish."

"And you think I'm not tall enough?"

"What?" Her fingers lifted from the keys and her eyes suddenly were very large under their black brows.

"Or violent enough?"

His left hand curved abruptly over the back of her head and his mouth split the thin thread of her lips.

"No, John! You hurt me!" She turned her head from side to side, twisting away from his pursuing mouth.

The latch of the outer door clicked and Mrs. Corsey's voice rippled in on a wave of frosty air. "I solemnly vow I'll never go see John Drew again. He's played John Drew for twenty years now and it's the same rôle on and off the stage, and I prefer him in a drawing-room."

Mildred was dabbing her lips with the back of her hand. John stepped quickly across the room to the fruit dish. Mrs. Corsey came through the curtains followed by her husband.

"Hello, chickies: not in bed yet!"

Mildred's palm struck a discord as she stood up. There was a rosy smear of blood on the knuckle of her first finger.

"Just in from the orchestra, mother," said John.

"And a telegram from the Hot," said Mildred.

"They're staying another week."

"Delighted, my dear. You'll stay with us."

"Oh, I couldn't inflict—"

"Mildred, dear, you know I'd like to have you stay here always."

A silence. Dr. Corsey amputated it. "Alice, your delicate tread appears to have had all the lightness of a Percheron's."

"I quite mean it," Mrs. Corsey, unabashed, kissed Mildred's cheek and then John's lips. "Good night, sillies." She extracted an Albemarle pippin as she passed the fruit dish and moved upstairs to bed.

Dr. Corsey, helpless, poured a glass of port. "Ummmm. Rather good condition, isn't it? Yes. Yes. Good night." He escaped.

They stood and looked at each other. She was very straight and white and her scarlet lips were a little parted, and she was swaying slightly before the black piano. His legs were wide apart, his neck thrust forward and his breathing was audible. A rim of white grew around her eyes. Suddenly she wheeled and fled upstairs. The door to her room at the back of the house closed with a little bang.

John poured a glass of port and sipped it very slowly, walking up and down the music room. The feet of his mother and father crossed and recrossed the floor above. Then there was silence. He rang. Pullen appeared. "You can close up, Pat; I'm going to bed." He walked upstairs. There was no light in any room on the second floor. He looked at the lock of the door to Mildred's room, tiptoed to the door and listened. Pullen came up the stairs. John walked ahead of him. The fourth step creaked. "Good night, Pat." Pullen turned out the lights on the stairs. "Good night, Mr. Johnny."

John cleaned his teeth, ran a bath, plunged into it, soaped himself violently, rinsed, rubbed dry. Then he cleaned his teeth again. He drew on his pajamas, turned out the lights in his room, and tiptoed to the door. A slipper clicked against his heel. He shook off his slippers and felt along the wall of the hall to the stairs. Slowly he crept down, took a long stride over the fourth step and stood in the dark outside Mildred's door. His fingers crawled along the jamb to the knob. He turned it. The latch clicked. He leaned forward. The door was locked.

There was a little thud as he released the knob and lurched toward the stair. His feet struck the descending

instead of the ascending tread. He stumbled and sat down. He sat a long time, his head in his hands. There was no sound in the house but the ticking of the clock which had stood at the head of the stairs through the lives of three generations of Corseys.

A faint scrape transformed the darkness. He rose and pressed close to the wall. But no one came into the hall and there was no succeeding sound. A long time he stood and listened on the stair. Then he crept to Mildred's door and listened. His hand felt up the door jamb to the knob. He turned it. The latch clicked. He leaned forward. Linen sheets swished suddenly. He closed and locked the door behind him and groped across the darkness to the bed.

His hand touched her hair. . . . His mouth was on her throat and she was shivering. . . . He pressed her back to the pillow and his mouth groped to her lips. . . . His hands began to move. "No! No! John! I'm afraid! No! No! Not that!" She was straining away from him, hysterically whispering: "No! No! John! I'll scream!" Her voice rose to a stifled cry, "No!"

A door opened. John sprang and crouched beside the bed. Dr. Corsey's feet shuffled into the bathroom which separated his room from Mildred's. A long cold silence stretched immeasurably. Then a torrent of water gushed in the bathroom. Dr. Corsey's feet shuffled back to bed.

John stumbled to the door, unlocked it, and went out. The fourth step creaked.



He was wearing his fur coat and his derby was in his hand when he knocked at Mildred's door. She was sitting in bed, jacketed in black velvet with marabou marking the neck and sleeves, and her breakfast tray was on her knees.

"Mildred," he closed the door, "I've got to talk to you some time to-day."

"Now," she said,

"No, when we won't be interrupted. What are you doing to-night?"

"I promised Kitty Clay I'd dine with her and—"

"Tell mother you're dining there. Tell Kitty you can't come and meet me at Tooler's at seven."

"Where's Tooler's?"

"You know. Spring Street. A place people lunch."

"But—"

"There'll be no one but ourselves in the second-floor dining-room."

"Why won't you stay now and—"

"Because I don't want to! And I have to go out to that accursed model town of Grumble's and write a Sunday story about how wonderful it is for the employees who work in his damned worsted mill. I'll be at Tooler's at seven."

"But, John . . ." Her eyes turned uncertainly to the heavy snowflakes falling sluggish and adhesive on the window.

"You'll be there!" He slammed the door behind him.



The evening train from Grumbletown to Chesterbridge crawled into High Street Station an hour late: a foot of snow on the coach roofs. John ran down the station stairs to the cab stand. "*Times* office. Then Tooler's restaurant. Spring Street." The glass of the hansom became instantly opaque with snow.

He ran up the three sagging flights of stairs to the *Times* local room and hurried to the desk of the night city editor. "Mr. Bloomshield, I'll be in to write the story after supper. Train late account of the storm. Can't wait now. I've an engagement that I— Waiting now." He headed for the door by which he had entered.

"Say, Corsey!" Slemple called as he passed. "There was a girl here wanted—"

"See you later." John dived for the stairs.

"Tooler's and hurry!" The hansom lurched through the snowdrifts.

He shoved a bill into the driver's hand and entered the Fishhouse. Three chins smiled at him above a broad white apron. "Ah, Mr. Corsey, glad to see you back! We've—"

"Has a lady been here asking for me?"

"Not yet, sir. Will you have your usual table?"

"Yes. That is, if the lady comes."

A four-wheeler became vaguely evident beyond the slanting lines of snow. He opened the door for Mildred.

Her face was hidden by a heavy veil. She hurried through the lower room and up the stairs. The waiter took her sealskin coat and she stood chafing her fingers.

"Sit here, will you?" John drew out the chair which faced the window and took his customary seat facing the door. He ordered oyster stew, steak, potatoes, and mince pie, and the waiter left. They looked at each other. Then the tense scarlet line of her mouth cracked in a swift smile.

"Don't look so tragic, John."

"I feel tragic. Everything was so beautiful. Inevitable. And then . . ." His shoulders lifted a trifle and his hands fell on the table with a little thud.

She did not answer but, when he looked up, her eyes were beggars, imploring understanding.

"It all came in such a flash, Mildred. Yes, like lightning. And as lovely. It seemed to me as if it had always been inevitable; that we never could have got away from each other; that we'd been fools all our lives not to have known we loved each other and were made for each other. And I thought you felt that way, too. And—"

"Maybe I did."

"Then why did you . . ."

She looked at him a long time, her lower lip aquiver.

"Why didn't you keep me from speaking and go on?" she said.

"You! . . . You wanted me to do that?"

Her head fell, her teeth caught her under lip, and a half-sob shook her.

"Then you love me! You'll marry me, Mildred! Oh, God, to-night we'll!" He leaned across the table and wrenched her lips up to his mouth.

A glass upset by his coat splintered on the floor.

He released her. Then he stood staring at the doorway, eyes white, mouth hanging agape.

Nina Michaud was standing in the doorway.

"What's the matter, John!" Mildred looked up at him and turned quickly.

Nina was a flight of diminishing footsteps.

"Nothing. Nothing." He dropped into his seat. "Nothing at all, darling, only just—"

The front door of the Fishhouse slammed.

"What is it, John?" She leaned across the table and reached for his hand.

He made a grimace that was intended to be a smile. "Nothing, child. I thought I saw . . . I thought I saw my Aunt Augusta standing there looking at us and I couldn't bear the idea of any one gossiping about you, so . . . Do you mind, Mildred, if I run after her one instant . . . just catch her and ask her please to say nothing?" He was halfway to the stair.

"John dear, she wouldn't gossip about . . ."

He ran down the stairs and out of the Fishhouse. Through the white obscurity of the snow he saw a woman hurrying up the street. He ran, calling, "Nina! Nina!" Under an arc light the woman turned. It was a negress. "What's the matter, bo? Been sniffin' the snow?" she chuckled. "No, no." He ran down the street. Between the dark walls of the warehouses in the cross street there was no moving thing except the sluggish snow. He turned and ran toward the house where Nina had lived.

There was a light in the basement. The phonograph was jerking out, "Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer true." He knocked. George Milligan appeared.

"Where's Nina?"

"Is she back in Chesterbridge?"

"Milligan! Please tell me! You must know!"

"I haven't seen her."

"You swear she hasn't been here?"

"Have you seen her? What's wrong? What the hell are you doin' out a night like this without a hat or coat?"

"If she comes, will you tell her I must see her? I must! George, can you think where she might be? Will you go look for her?"

"Is something wrong with her?"

"Yes. And I must find her!"

"Did you see her?"

"Yes. One second."

"Whereabouts?"

"Down—down the street."

"What was wrong with her?"

"She looked . . . she looked . . . destroyed."

"What did she say?"

"I didn't have a chance to speak to her. We've got to find her, George!"

"We can try some of the places she used to go. Have you tried Tooler's?"

"She's not there."

The heads of the Milligan children appeared behind George.

"You will look for her?"

"Sure."

"Thank you, oh, thank you! Good-bye."

He crossed to the square, then abruptly halted. "She was coming back to me," he said. . . . "I've destroyed her! Destroyed her!" He began to run.

Something struck him. He reeled, hands on his forehead. "Steady, John, steady." He had run into a telegraph pole. "You've got to go now to Mildred. Mildred's waiting for you. You're engaged to Mildred. You love Mildred and you're going to marry her." He drew in his stomach and his chin and walked stiffly toward the Fish-house. Something rubbed against his leg. He jumped

aside. It was a shivering hound bitch, heavy with pups. Her brown eyes reached up to him. He hurried into the Fishhouse.

"John!" A rocket of laughter sprayed him. "You look like the Kris Kingle in Roediger's!" Mildred's long fingers began to brush the snow off his hair and his forehead. "You've hurt yourself!"

"I slipped and fell. It's nothing."

"Poor darling!" She stood on tiptoe and kissed his forehead. "I'm so glad you're back. I'd begun to feel like a deserted wife. Take off your coat." She shook the snow off his coat while he brushed his legs. "And I'd begun to wonder . . ."

"I can imagine."

"Who was it?"

"Aunt Augusta."

"Really?" Her lids slanted across the corners of her eyes as she handed him his coat.

"Yes, really. When I fell I—I rather knocked myself out for a minute and I had to chase her all the way to her house before I caught her."

"I'm glad it was no worse than Augusta. You were so upset I thought it might have—"

"What do you expect me to be but upset, child, after last night, and this?"

"Happy."

"Angel!" He kissed her lips. Then he drew out her chair and they sat down.

"What did you tell Augusta?"

"That we were engaged but please not to speak of it to any one. We are engaged, I suppose?"

"Certainly not, if you say it that gloomily," she smiled.

"I wasn't gloomy. Just . . . uncertain. I just can't believe you could really want to marry me. I'm not much good, Mildred."

She laughed. "What are you trying to do? Persuade me not to marry you?"

"Oh God no, child! But I'm not much good. Really

not, Mildred, and you're such an angel that . . ." He paused and her eyebrows drew to a troubled pucker.

"I need you, Mildred, I need you terribly. I don't know what I'd do without you. I'm—I've gotten to a point where I—I can't imagine living a normal life without you, Mildred. The kind of life I want to live, here in Chesterbridge. Without you I'd—I don't know what I'd do or where I'd go. You're a whole way of life to me, Mildred! But I can't see why you should want me. I don't think I'm the kind of person to make anybody happy."

"You think I'd do better with Exmoor's adenoids?" she smiled. "Thanks. Having observed mother, I know what it is to live with a husband who doesn't work and whose chief distinction is that he can pronounce Camembert more perfectly than any one outside Paris. Exmoor can't even pronounce Camembert."

The waiter appeared with a steaming oyster stew and a slice of mince pie.

"Now eat your dinner and I'll explore the pie till you catch up with me."

"No, really, I don't want a thing but a cup of coffee. A large cup, please."

"The stew's elegant and the sirloin's grand, Mr. Corsey," the waiter urged.

"No, really, thank you. Just coffee." The waiter waddled away.

"What is the matter, John. You're—"

"Nothing, darling. I just want to get it over quickly, so that we—"

"That's complimentary!" she smiled.

"So that we can get away and . . . You see, Mildred, for a little while I have to go back to the office and write the—"

"No, John! You can't! This is our night!"

"Of course it's our night, you angel, and I'll come back as soon as . . . But I've got to write this story or get fired."

"Let them fire you. Theodore will make you editor-in-chief to-morrow."

"I'll only be a little while. One hour, Mildred, and then . . ."

She spread her long fingers and let them fall into her lap. The waiter appeared with the coffee.

"The bill, please, at once."

"Yes, sir."

John gulped the coffee. Mildred was looking at her hands lying in her lap.

"Mildred! Please!"

She looked up.

"You can't misunderstand. What's the matter?"

"I don't know. You're different. Not a bit like you were last night. I . . . I've been thinking of this all day and it's . . . it's so different."

"Things always are different."

"But if they're not like what one has imagined, one doesn't want . . ."

"Mildred, everything is going to be a thousand times more wonderful than anything you could have imagined. Just trust me, child."

She was peering at him, silent, when the waiter returned with the bill. John paid it and they walked out into the snow. "Kernel Street car, I think," he said. They walked in silence to Kernel Street and stood a long time silent waiting for the trolley.

The car was empty. She sat in the corner by the door. He huddled close beside her and groped under her coat for her hand. It was very cold and it lay motionless in his, unresponsive to the pleading of his fingers. The car groaned slowly up to the Square. Under the shadow of the brownstone church they got out and walked in silence to the Corsey house. He opened the door with his latch-key.

She turned. "You're really going away?"

"But I'm coming back," he smiled.

He was blowing a kiss to her through the glass panel

of the closed door when Pullen came out of the shadows behind her. John hurried down the steps. Pullen followed him.

"Mr. Johnny! I thought you'd like to know. There was a lady called. The lady—"

"What time? To-night?"

"No, sir. About six."

"What did she say?"

"Just asked for you."

"Did she leave her address?"

"She didn't leave no message. When I told her you was out and was working and wasn't expected for dinner she said she guessed she knew where she'd find you."

"She did," said John.

He stumbled through the drifts on Pleasant Street to the Milligans' basement. The phonograph was vomiting a two-step. He knocked. Mrs. Milligan opened the door.

"Come right in, Mr. Corsey. We're having a bit of music."

"I just wanted to see George a minute."

"Come right in."

She opened an inner door and John saw Mary Milligan twist quickly out of her brother's arms and stretch herself on the sofa.

"It's Mr. Corsey," Mrs. Milligan announced.

"I don't want to disturb you," said John, "I just have to ask George—"

"Not a sign of her," said George.

"Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm so glad you're better, Mrs. Dewey."

"Denny. And I ain't better. I'm most paralyzed."

"Yes, and she's suing the trolley company for twenty thousand dollars damages!" boasted little Rose.

"Rosie!" Her mother thrust the child behind her. "Poor Mary! She's been bedridden ever since her trouble. Looks like she'll never walk right again."

"I'm so sorry," said John, "very sorry. Thank you so much. Good night. Good night."

He hurried through the deserted square and down the street toward the river. The black outlines of the docks rose before a sliding background of gray ice cakes, snow-laden, drifting to the sea. He plowed along Dock Street, peering down at the muttering ice. A ferry thumped across the river. He stopped. "She couldn't have! She couldn't have done that! No! She wouldn't have! No more than Mary Milligan would have! She'd pick herself up and go on." He stood a minute motionless; then he turned up Spring Street. "Paralyzed! Dancing!" Half a laugh snorted through his nostrils. "And she'll get her twenty thousand! And by God, it's all right! It's healthy. They've got some sense of self-preservation. They're not like you, John. They've got bounce!" The little finger of his left hand bent slowly to the palm and he hurried to the Kernel Street trolley.

He let himself quietly into the house on the Square, felt to the dining-room, groped on the sideboard for the whisky decanter, poured half a glass of Oil of Joy and gulped it. Then he crept upstairs to his room and pulled on his pajamas. He tiptoed to his door, then stopped. "It's not fair! It's not fair!" He leaned against the door. "You can't go to Mildred feeling this way!" He stood a long time, motionless. "Oh, come on, John, bounce! You'll lose her for good if you don't go to her now. And you want her. . . . Maybe her door's locked, anyhow." He tiptoed down the stairs. The fourth step creaked. He stood a long time outside her door. His hand groped to the knob. The latch clicked. The door swung in.



"Oh, how wonderful! Oh, Nina! Mildred! Oh!"



The shouts of children snowballing in the Square awakened him. He jumped out of bed, drew on his dressing-gown, and slippers, and ran down to Mildred's room.

She was sitting in bed looking at her hands. Her breakfast, untasted, was on the table beside her. She glanced at him and looked down again at her hands. He took her in his arms and leaned to her lips. She turned away.

"Mildred!"

She shook her head.

"Mildred, you can't be unhappy!"

"Why not?" she said.

"Oh, darling, I'm so sorry! I'm so ashamed. I'd give my soul if I hadn't said that."

"It wasn't so much that. I could understand that. You'd lived a long time with her. And it was natural maybe to think—"

"I swear to you I wasn't thinking of her!"

"Even if you weren't, it meant you'd lied to me. It was she and not your Aunt Augusta."

He nodded.

"Why couldn't you have told me?"

"I . . . I don't know why . . . I . . . I didn't want anything to spoil—"

"Spoil!"

"It hasn't, Mildred!"

"I'll never quite believe in you again."

His eyes closed and he sat a long time silent. And when he spoke his eyes were still closed.

"Mildred, you have to understand! You must be able to see that when something comes at one so violently, so unexpectedly . . . one's so shaken that one doesn't act like one's self."

"It seems to me that's the very time when one does act like one's truest self. . . . Besides, you must have known it was likely to happen."

"I swear to you I hadn't seen her or heard from her for three months. I didn't even know she was in America. I thought she was in Paris. I don't know any more than you do why she came back. I was just overwhelmed. I'd been thinking of no one but you all day. Not one

thought of her. I'd been seeing all the life we'd have together. I was crazy with want for you. And then you said you'd have me and I was . . . You know how I was when I kissed you. Then I was . . . It was like an earthquake! You must be able to understand, Mildred. You can forgive me!"

"Oh, it isn't really that." She was looking again at her long fingers twining on the white bedspread.

"What is it then?" He stared at her.

"I don't know."

"You do know."

"It's . . . It's so hard to say."

He held the silence till his tension snapped.

"What is it?"

She looked into his eyes. "You weren't the same."

"What do you mean?"

"You weren't . . . the way you were night before last. And . . ." She turned away and spread her fingers.

"What?"

"It's so hard to say."

"Say it! For God's sake, say it quickly!"

"I'm . . . If— If the real you isn't what you were night before last, before—before your father opened that door, you're . . . you're not what I want."

"Mildred!" His lips drained her eyes and mouth. His hands plunged through her hair and forced her to the pillow and his teeth mumbled her throat and ears. She began to sob with an open mouth. His hand lunged down her side.

"Mildred dear!" Brightly his mother opened the door. "John!"

"Yes, mother, yes!" he shouted, and sprang up. "We're—we're engaged, mother!"

"I should hope so!" Her voice was an ice splinter. She started out, then she turned and suddenly began to cry and stumbled to the bed. "Oh, my chickies, my darling chickies!" She dropped to the bed and gathered them into her arms.

They were all sniffing when Dr. Corsey knocked on the door and called: "John! Are you there?"

"Yes, father, come in!"

Dr. Corsey entered. "Excuse me, Mildred, but—"

"Randall! They're engaged!" Mrs. Corsey sobbed a laugh.

"Oh, my dear John, congratulations! And my—my heartiest welcome, Mildred." He bent and kissed her hand.

"You formal old fool!" Mrs. Corsey hugged him tempestuously. He stood smiling, embarrassed, brushing his hair back into place.

"I shouldn't have disturbed you; but you'll excuse me—I—I—"

"Just go away and leave us alone and we'll excuse you anything!" John pushed his mother and father out of the room and locked both doors.

"Well, we're engaged!" he grinned.

"I suppose so."

"Mildred, you can't!"

"Oh, I do love you, John, but a life's a long time and if you're not quite sure. . . ."

"You will be to-night." He took her in his arms. "Now send a telegram to your mother." He brought paper and pencil from the Queen Anne desk in the corner. She wrote. He took the paper and laughed. "Sounds like a prison sentence: 'Please come home. I'm engaged to John Corsey.'"

"Then add, 'Very happy.'"

He took the pencil and wrote: "Gout or no gout abandon mud baths and prepare for Mendelssohn and orange blossoms. I've hooked John Corsey at last."

She smiled. "Send whatever you want."

"Cheer up for Pete's sake, Mildred! Just remember it isn't a life sentence. There's always the refuge of divorce."

"That's true."

"And if you ever get one bit tired of me, or I of you,

we'll— What damned nonsense! Dear angel, we're going to have the most wonderful life that two human beings ever had. I'm going to write the greatest books and edit the *Times* and run the town and do everything in politics that seems amusing. How'd you like the White House? And we'll travel all over the earth and you'll have a dozen children. Get up and get dressed and we'll go down to Constable's and pick out an emerald as big as a tennis court!"

"I'd rather have a ruby."

"Ruby or emerald, I don't care so long as you'll accept the mark of bondage." He leaned over her. She raised her lips.



John flung his evening coat over a chair, ripped off his white tie and collar, sat at his desk and addressed an envelope: "Robert Corsey, Esqre., 15 Rue Boissonade, Paris, France." Then he wrote:

DEAR BOBBY:

You'll probably have read the news in the *Herald* long before this reaches you; but old or new here it is: I've been engaged for a week to Mildred Ashley. She's an angel and I'm happy as hell. On second thoughts I endorse the comparison. Being engaged and not married is cruel and unusual punishment, if you know what I mean, and as close to hell as I ever want to come. We aren't going to be married until seven weeks from to-morrow and I'll be a corpse by the time the agony's over. The obsequies will take place at St. Mark's of course. Twelve bridesmaids and the Rev. Chauncey Oglethorpe, D.D., the torturer of our youth, will do the job assisted by the Bishop—or the other way around.

I want you to be best man. But I'll understand perfectly if you can't come. Don't think of it if it breaks into your work. Theodore will give me first aid if you can't come, and at least I'll know he won't lose the ring and you certainly would. Incidentally, you ought to see the ruby I got Mildred. It's almost a carnation,

The usual rumpus has started already. Luncheons and dinners for us every day. Mildred seems to have three hundred relatives I never heard of: mostly very rich unmarried old ladies and gentlemen who have to be dined with and offer in return everything from tiaras to automobiles. It's awful.

Mildred is set on having an automobile. I think they're horrible. Damned noisy, smelly messes. I'd rather have a three-minute trotter than all the cars ever made. But we may spend part of our wedding trip motoring in France. What is the least worst variety? Panhard? We may write you to buy us one.

That brings me to something else I want you to do for me—something which you will please forget as soon as you've done it and which you'll handle with your customary delicate touch. You never heard of a painter named Michaud. Neither did any one else. But he happened to be working on a portrait of me when he died. He had a daughter. I got to know her pretty well. Well enough to be worried as hell about her now. She's disappeared and I can't find a trace of her. I don't even know if she's dead. And that's what worries me most. She may be in America. She may be in France. That's where you come in.

She shipped all her father's pictures to Paris and I have a faint memory of the dealer to whom she sent them. I've forgotten his name (all I can think of is Hen!) but I do remember that the street was named after a good wine. And it was a Bordeaux not a Burgundy. I think it was one of the La's—Larose or Lafitte or La Tour—it certainly wasn't Margaux. So will you please compare a Paris Directory with a list of First Growths and find Mr. Hen and discreetly pump out of him all the information you can possibly get about Miss Nina Michaud. *Most important: her address.*

If you find she's in America, will you cable me the address (without the name).

Please don't think this is a joke. It is really important to me—*really*. And forgive me for being such a nuisance.

I hope you've got Leonardo and Raphael turning over in their graves for envy and that you're as full of hopes and expectations as I am. By the way, did you see my stories in the *Century* and the *Atlantic*? Very Maupassant!

So long, son. Good luck and au revoir and don't forget—discretion is the word—you'd better burn this letter.

Yrs.

JOHN.

P.S. If Nina Michaud is in France, please contrive some way to get a thousand dollars to her and I'll repay you. *And do it now.*

Thanks and apologies again.

J.

P.P.S. You'd better make it two thousand. And you needn't worry about being repaid. Father's put a flat hundred thousand in bank for me. Isn't he the damndest saint!

JOHN.



Theodore Corsey sat in the red plush armchair by the library table of the house on the Square sipping a glass of port. He was dressed in black in honor of the death of his father-in-law, Paul Chatham. John sat on the table dangling his legs.

Theodore set down his glass meticulously. "Very sound port."

"Oh, come on, Ted! You can't get away with that grandfather stuff when you're talking to me," John grinned. "I'll expect you to tell me to say 'sir' to you next."

"That wouldn't be altogether inappropriate as I'm your employer." A smile folded the skin around Theodore's pale blue eyes.

John put his thumb to his nose and twiddled his fingers.

"And you'd better act less like an infant, Johnny. I'm thinking of making you editor-in-chief when you get back from your wedding trip."

"What's the matter with old Henley?"

"Don't you want the job?"

"It's a shame to throw the old man out. He's been on the paper forty years now. Lord, Ted, he interviewed Lincoln for the *Times*!"

"That's just the trouble. He's fossilized. So's the paper. I've been looking into the accounts and I find the *Times* has been running behind fifty to a hundred thousand a year; and, between ourselves, it has a circulation of only thirty-nine thousand."

"That's because it's too good a paper for the mob."

"It ought to have a hundred thousand, and it never will so long as Henley runs it."

"What do you care, so long as it stands for something fine?"

"It's not business."

"Certainly it's not. It's a newspaper. It's a public responsibility. And why do you give a damn? Pauline's inherited all the coal in the country."

"Not a single mine. Chatham and Company don't hold a thing but long-term contracts as sales agents for—"

"Every bituminous mine in the world."

"About sixty per cent."

"And you expect me to think you're poor?"

"No. It's a wonderful business, wonderful. And I'm going to make it ten times as wonderful as it is. You see, John, we really control the world market. What does that suggest to you?"

"Nothing except that it must be a bore."

Theodore laughed. "Wait and see."

"And that you'd never miss fifty or a hundred thousand a year."

"It's not the money. It's a question of principle. Business is business. A newspaper is a business just like any other. If it doesn't pay, you make it pay. If you can't make it pay, you sell it."

"Who's been stuffing you with that sort of—"

"Anyhow there's no use talking about Henley. Mr. Leather and I have decided he's got to go."

"The Weasel! What's the Weasel got to do with it?"

"He's bought MacMahon's forty-nine per cent of the stock."

"I'll be damned! Think of that little office boy having a finger in the *Times*."

"I control it. And you'd better moderate your remarks about Mr. Leather, John: he's a big man, a mighty big man."

"About five feet four."

"Hell, John! Do you want to edit the *Times*, or don't you? I'm not going to sit here begging you and listening to you be flip."

"Certainly I want to edit it; but if you kick Henley, you've got to kick him upstairs. Make him Editor Emeritus at an increased salary or get him elected to the state Senate: something to save his face. You know: 'Mr. Henley is entering a sphere of larger usefulness.'"

"You can work that out to suit yourself. The main thing is, you've got to make the paper pay. If you want to carry Henley, you can. I'll leave the *Times* absolutely to you. I'll have all I can do to run Chatham and Corsey."

"You're going to change the name?"

"Yes, and make C and C Bituminous mean something! You will take the *Times*?"

"Sure."

"Good. There's just one condition I want to make."

"What is it?"

"That—eh—that—eh—you stop writing stories like the one you published in the *Century*."

"What in hell do you mean?"

"Now don't get mad. I'm talking seriously."

"So am I. What in hell *do* you mean?"

"Well, I—we were both—it wasn't the sort of thing for a gentleman to write. It wasn't the sort of thing one would expect of you. It—eh—it was very nearly—eh—immoral."

"Immoral!"

"Yes. Pauline and I agreed that—" A chatter of girls' voices came down the stairs. "Don't you see, John, if you're the head of a great public institution like the

Times, you can't write stories about French immorality. If you ever go into politics, as I hope you will, that one story will—"

"Drip!" John exploded.

Three girls came through the green portières of the library, arms claspings waists. Mildred Ashley was in the center. To the right was Eleanor Corsey, her red hair flaming against the green curtains, her eager lips aquiver. To the left was Pauline, Theodore's wife, tightly incased in black, trim and tight from her little feet to her compressed mouth and her round brown eyes.

"What's the fight?" Eleanor beamed.

"It's a real one," said John. "Ted wants me to give up writing."

"That's not fair, John! I said writing immoral stories if you were editing the *Times*."

"I don't see what you've got to do with John's writing!" Eleanor flared.

"Oh, shut up, Eleanor! This is a serious discussion."

"Well, I don't—"

"Now, John—"

"But he never—"

"The point is:" Pauline's voice was so quiet and accurate that they listened. "Ted and I have talked it over and we want to make John editor of the *Times*. But that is a position of great dignity and responsibility and influence. No one occupying that position can publish stories of the sort that would be published by an ordinary literary man of the Paris boulevards. Besides, we hope that John will go into politics some day and achieve great distinction, and no public man can write—"

"What about Disraeli?" John interrupted.

"I'm speaking of America."

"Then Roosevelt or John Hay."

"I quite agree that one can write books for boys or historical romances or even humorous poetry of a sort but no—"

"John Hay writes novels. So does Henry Adams."

"But they're careful not to publish them under their own names."

"Well, so far as I'm concerned I'll write what I please."

"You mean you don't want to edit the *Times*?" said Theodore.

"The *Times* can go to hell."

"I've an engagement, Ted. Would you care to go with me?" Pauline turned toward the door.

"But you do want to edit the *Times*, John!" Mildred laid a suppliant hand on Pauline's arm.

"Certainly I do. But not if I have to give up writing."

"You don't."

"Writing truly. Writing life as I see it."

"Not for a minute. You just wouldn't sign your name. Like Hay or Adams. Why couldn't you take a pen name?" The front doorbell rang.

"I don't know. It seems a sort of cowardice."

"Nonsense, John!" Mildred moved to him. "You can't sniff at Hay."

"I'll pick you a beauty," bubbled Eleanor. "Uther Pendragon or Gareth Bayard."

"Don't be a silly." Mildred pinched his cheeks. "You shan't throw away the *Times*."

Pounder entered with letters. Eleanor pounced on them. "One from Bobby! For you, Johnny." He put the letter in his pocket. "Oh, do open it! It'll be all about you and Mildred."

"No. I want to get this settled."

"It's agreeable to us," said Theodore. "Write what you please and sign what you please, but not John Corsey. Eh, Pauline?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"I don't know," said John.

"Yes, you do, silly!" said Mildred. "Now really! Admit it. If one has a certain position, one doesn't sign that sort of thing."

"You really agree with them?"

"I'm sure they're right."

John touched his hand to his forehead and bowed. "All right. Now if you'll excuse me a moment I'll run upstairs and get the Cunard sailing list." He bowed again and hurried out of the room.

Pauline moved quietly to Mildred's side and kissed her cheek. "You're going to be such a wonderful wife for him," she said.



John ripped open Bobby's letter.

15 Rue Boissonade,
Paris.

DEAR JOHN:

Hooray for you! Congratulations! Embraces! And my sincerest sympathy. I think anybody who gets married is a damned fool; but if you had to do it I think you couldn't have done better than Mildred. I remember amazing golden hair and black eyebrows and a mouth like a vermilion knife. Mother must be delirious. Mildred's just her kind. I wish I could get home for the wedding and I'm glad you wanted me for best man, but I'm working like a German and it's your own fault. I found your man Michaud's paintings, and they're *great*! The greatest stuff of the century, I think. He's right in the line of Poussin, Chardin, Courbet, and Delacroix and stronger than any of them. He's the first person that ever has given paint as much form as sculpture, and his design and color—Good Lord! Since I've seen his things I've cut loose from all my old stuff and if I can paint in all my life one canvas half as good as any of his I'll call it a career.

Your memory of Bordeaux was pretty good. It was 47 Rue Lafitte and "Hen" was Volaille! And I've found out about Michaud's daughter. I just missed seeing her by a couple of days. When your letter arrived I was finishing a canvas au Carolus Duran, which I thought, then, was pretty good, so I delayed a few days doing the job for you. Then I knew it wasn't La Tour. That's in Passy, nothing

on it. And there isn't any Larose. So I walked down the Rue Lafitte and there was a nude of Michaud's in the window. Think of you discovering him! And having your portrait done by him! If you never do anything in your life, you're immortal!

I bought a couple of pictures on the spot. And only paid twelve hundred dollars for them! (Nobody but a few artists has discovered him yet.) A still life—lemons and cucumbers and a pewter pot—that beats any Chardin, and an amazing portrait of his daughter. Of course that made me a bosom friend of Volaille's and gave me a chance to ask questions. He told me the daughter had been in Paris a week and had sold him all her father's pictures in one lump. I tried to discover what he'd paid. But you know the French. Still, whatever sort of a Jew he is (and they are), she must have plenty of money for the moment. He couldn't have paid her less than twenty or maybe fifty thousand francs. He swore he didn't know her address. She told him she didn't know herself just where she'd be. Said she'd write him and hasn't. All he knows is that she left town a couple of days ago and was going South somewhere to work. Incidentally, he had a piece of her sculpture: devilish original but beyond me. Her father paints like a sculptor and she sculpts like an architect (not Beaux Arts!)—strong and simple forms, but of course you've seen her stuff.

Volaille surprised me by saying something you didn't mention: she was apparently married in America and he'd rather gathered that she and her husband had separated recently. Anyhow she was married but is traveling under her own name.

What do you want for a wedding present? Would you like Michaud's portrait of his daughter? If I'm not too nutty about it myself, I'll send it to you.

Well, good luck, old cock. My love to Mildred and a French embrace on both cheeks to yourself, from your much-obliged-for-the-introduction brother

BOBBY.

He sat staring at the word: married.

"John!" Mildred's perfect voice came up the stairs.



The *Campania* was pitching through a heavy night sea. John and Mildred Corsey lay in a bed in the royal suite.

"I do wish we'd decided to go first to Paris," said Mildred. "One can't get clothes in London and I need—"

"Dear angel, you have three trunks full."

"But I've not a stitch to wear at Cowes or Ascot. I do wish you hadn't persuaded me not to go to Paris."

"I hate Paris," said John.

A heavy wave thudded against the bulwarks. The ship shuddered and shook herself with racing screws. A drench of spray whanged on the portholes. The ship rolled and John slid into Mildred's arms. His lips crept into the hollow under her ear. His fingers began to circle her left breast like the fingers of a blind sculptor seeing the breasts of a Venus, around and around, over and over. . . . A sea of time rolled motionless.

"Just think of the poor devils in the steerage on a night like this," said Mildred.

He got up very suddenly, switched on lights, and lit a cigarette.

"What's the matter, John?"

"I guess—I guess I'm a bit seasick." He lay down on the other bed.



A June breeze stirred the lace curtains of their room in the Berkeley, bringing a country odor from the dark garden of Devonshire House. John stood by a window looking into the greening sky.

"It's been wonderful." Mildred stretched her body on the bed. "I've met more attractive people in the past six weeks than in all the rest of my life. But I'll be glad to get down to the country, won't you? I think your Aunt Muriel is too adorable, and they say Sherbury's place is the loveliest in Norfolk. Auburn Hall, isn't it?"

John turned and stood beside the bed.

"My God, you're beautiful, Mildred!"

Under the glow of the rosy bed lamp her hair spread

downward like a bright mantilla into which her body had sunk. Her arms were bent upward, creasing the pillow into little valleys. Her hands were under her head. The shadows of her armpits were blue. Her right hand moved and her fingers plucked a bit of down from the uncovered end of the pillow. She blew the tiny feather into the air and watched it sink slowly to her body. It alighted on her long second toe. She plucked another bit of down and blew it into the air. John kissed her feet. Each toe and then the insteps, heels, and ankles. His hands crept to her knees and his lips followed them. She did not stir. He was shivering. Her right hand moved. He looked up. She was blowing a feather into the air.

He became still. And he was very still a long time. He got up slowly and walked to the bathroom. He was gone a long time. When he came back he said: "Mildred, I might as well tell you, I've had bad news from Bobby."

"I didn't even know you'd heard from him."

"I didn't want to worry you. He's in trouble. I ought to go over to Paris to see him. Would you mind if I—"

"What's happened?"

"He's in trouble. It's pretty bad."

"With a woman?"

"Yes."

"I'll go over with you and get some clothes."

"That would be lovely but . . . really we ought not both to disappoint Aunt Muriel. She's been so hospitable and of course she's having the house party for us. I'll just run over and try to put things right in a day and I'll be down in the country with you before you've even noticed I'm not there."

"I do need clothes."

"I'll have to spend all day with Bobby."

"I'll be with Worth and Reboux."

"No, Mildred, please. I'm so worried. And I don't want to have our first trip to Paris together spoiled. It wouldn't be sport at all. Just a hot stuffy journey and a dash back. And Aunt Muriel would be so hurt. She's

probably rounded up a choice herd of dukes for you. You won't mind."

"No. Not really. Turn the light out, will you? I'm fearfully sleepy. Ten dances in ten days is—" She yawned and he turned out the light. "Appalling! There's the dawn again," she sighed. He leaned and kissed her forehead.

"Not that kind. A nice one." Her hands clasped his head and drew his mouth to her lips.

"Thanks," he said.



John knocked on the door of the concierge's room at 15 Rue Boissonade. The toothless head of an old woman appeared. "Mr. Corsey's apartment?" "*Troisième à gauche. Mais il n'est pas chez lui.*" "May I go up and leave my bag? I am his brother." "*On voit ça,*" she grinned.

John mounted the worn oak steps. His telegram to Bobby was pinned to the studio door. He tore it and walked in. By the moonlight which came through the studio window he distinguished an easel bearing a large canvas splashed with black and blue. He dropped his bag and walked into the caressing night.

The lights of the Rotonde made a gay spot of yellow in the moonlit Raspail. He walked toward the café. Hundreds of men and women were sipping drinks at the tables of the Dome and the Rotonde on the sidewalks of the Montparnasse. He halted, scanning faces. At a table with two men and three girls sat his brother Bobby, looking very young and strong and out of place, collegiate. A thin girl, Egyptian eyes and brows elongated with blue, strolled down the sidewalk, and leaned over Bobby's shoulder. He smiled up into her eyes. She took his chin languidly, kissed him, and passed on. John moved forward.

"John! For cat's sake!" Bobby lurched up, blushing, pumped John's hand, and drew him away from the table

to the street. "Damned glad to see you, old man! Where's Mildred?"

"In London. I just ran over."

"How did you happen to come without her?" Bobby's eyebrows rose.

"I'm supposed to be pulling you out of a scrape with a woman."

"What do you mean?"

"That's what I told Mildred in order to get away."

"Damn it, John, that's not fair!" Bobby planted his unsteady legs and glared. "You can get me into a hell of a mess!"

"With the Cleopatra who just kissed you?" John laughed.

"With the girl I'm going to marry."

"Marry!"

"Yes."

"One of those girls?" John's head jerked a shocked nod toward the group at the table.

"Gertrude Sherbury."

"Aunt Muriel's?"

"Niece. Sherbury's brother is in the Embassy here. And your story will get to Gertrude through Aunt Muriel. You're a slob, John!"

"I'm terribly sorry, Bobby. I had no idea! I'm terribly sorry. But when . . . why on earth are you going to marry?"

"Because I'm in love. We'll be married this summer if I can make her."

"But are you sure you love her, Bobby? And are you sure she loves you?"

"She doesn't—yet. But I'll make her."

"But, Bobby, have you ever lived with her? Do you know—"

"Of course I've never lived with her. She's not a prostitute."

"But, Bobby! Then—then you don't know anything about her!"

"I know she's the most wonderful thing God ever made."

"Bobby! For heaven's sake don't ever marry a girl you haven't lived with: and lived with a long time!"

"Then I'd never marry. You know a girl of the kind I'd want to marry or you'd want to marry wouldn't let— Hell, I wouldn't want to do it! Gertrude? Damn it, I won't even think of it!"

"Bobby, it's crazy to marry a girl you haven't lived with!"

"What do you know about it, anyhow?"

"I know."

"You sound as if you'd made a mess of things with Mildred."

"I have."

"Good Lord!" Bobby whispered.

They walked in silence down the Rue Boissonade and upstairs to Bobby's studio. John groped to the couch. Bobby lighted a lamp.

"Oh, John, I'm so sorry, so sorry!" His arm went around John's shoulders and they sat a long time without speaking.

"That's why you came over?"

"I had to talk to some one."

Bobby squeezed his shoulder. "I'm glad it was me."

"It isn't you."

"That Michaud girl?"

"Yes."

"Why do you want to talk to her? Do you love her?"

A pause.

"I'm so puzzled, so lost, and she seems to me the wisest person I've ever known: the only wise person I've ever known."

"I guess you love her," said Bobby.

"I don't know. . . . I never could imagine living a life with her—not in Chesterbridge."

"What's gone wrong between you and Mildred?"

"Nothing . . . but nothing's gone right."

"But you must have loved her!"

"I love her now but . . . Oh, it's terrible, Bobby!"

"What's terrible? What's she done to you?"

"Nothing. She's wonderful. Sweet and lovely always. Every one loves her. But . . . I don't know . . . I guess—I guess she just doesn't love me."

A silence.

"She must have loved you or she wouldn't have married you," said Bobby.

"I think she did, once. I think she did . . . or thought she did. Oh, she does love me! But she doesn't really want me. I think I almost made her once and then . . . Bobby, I just can't stir her at all! And she is passionate! She is! But I don't know the way to her. She's like a lock, a terrible complicated lock that I've lost the key to. And I had it once! Or she thought I had it and I thought. But maybe I never had it."

"Have a *fine*, John."

"Thanks."

They drank in silence.

"What are you going to do?" asked Bobby.

"I don't know. All I know is that I had to get away from Mildred. And I can't face going home with her to settle down in a house on the Square and spend the rest of my life hunting for the way to her."

"Why hunt?" Bobby poured himself another *fine*.
"After all, our highly estimable grandfather—"

"That's not what I want."

"And you'd have your writing."

"I'd never write a word."

"Why?"

"Because I'd spend every strength I've got trying to make our marriage go, trying to make her really care, trying to be the sort of person she'd really love. And I'd be afraid: afraid to write what I really wanted to write: afraid to displease her. I'd never write a line."

"That's different," said Bobby. "There's not much use living if you're not creating something."

"Yes, there is. Look at father. There are all sorts of fine, gallant things to do. And there are children. And I want them. And in Chesterbridge with Mildred."

"Then what's troubling you isn't Chesterbridge or writing; it's just your relationship with Mildred."

"But, don't you see, she's a whole way of life. Nina's another. If I had Nina and stayed here, I could write, I could—"

"You're getting mixed, John. If things were right with you and Mildred, you'd be happy in Chesterbridge, wouldn't you? whether you wrote or not?"

"Yes, but I'd write."

"If you really had it in you to write, you wouldn't care a damn about Mildred or Chesterbridge or anything but writing. If you can't write, it's not fair to put your failure on her. All that's really wrong is that you can't make Mildred show a passion for you."

"Isn't that enough?"

"Are you sure you just haven't been a damned fool the way you've handled her? Have you tried—"

"I've tried everything."

"I'd like you to take a few lessons from the lady you so delicately named Cleopatra. She came to me from a man whose only pleasure was to have his toes rubbed with a Turkish towel!" Bobby chuckled drunkenly. "Is that why you want to see the Michaud girl? Lessons?"

"Go to bed, Bobby. You're drunk."

"Sorry. I guess I am. Good night." He lurched to his feet. "Can you make yourself comfortable on that love-stained couch?"

"Yes. Good night," said John.

Bobby's voice came out of the darkness of the inner room, "I am damned sorry, John."



"I'd like to see Monsieur Volaille." John stood in the gallery on the Rue Lafitte.

"This way, monsieur."

A little man sat in a little room behind a large Napoleon desk, a rind of yellow skin enclosing shining mouse eyes and a sharp mouse nose.

"Monsieur Volaille?" The little man rose and bobbed a bow. "I am John Corsey: Robert Corsey's brother."

"One sees that. You too are interested in my Michauds?"

"Precisely."

"Joseph!" the little voice squeaked. "Bring down the Michauds."

"I have scarcely time this morning," said John. "I called particularly to ask you an address: the address of his daughter."

"I would be enchanted to give it you, Mr. Corsey, but unfortunately I do not know it."

"Is she in Paris?"

"She was, three weeks ago, but only for a day. Then she returned to the Midi. She left me this." He pointed to a small stone horse on the corner of his desk, angular and strong as an Assyrian bull. John looked at it, then at Volaille, then back at the horse.

"I'd like to buy it," he said.

"Mr. Corsey, I am delighted, delighted you too appreciate!"

"You don't know her address in the South?" asked John.

"But, no. She had been in Vence but was going somewhere toward the Spanish border. She will return when she has finished more work."

"But you do know how I can communicate with her."

"When she returns. A letter left here, perhaps."

"I want to find her to-day."

M. Volaille raised his palms and laughed. "You Americans! Everything instantly! You knew her then in America?"

"Yes."

"And her husband?"

"No. I didn't know she was married."

The yellow rind crinkled into a thousand winking wrinkles. "Nor do I, but I trust she is."

"What do you mean?"

Volaille turned out his palms. "She has but two or three months to wait."

"You—you mean she's having a child!"

"In two or three months."

"But—but you must be mistaken. You are mistaken!"

"Ah, monsieur, the father of two and the son of a *sage femme* does not mistake."

"And you don't know where she is? You don't know any one who might know, any one who could tell me?"

"Monsieur Corsey, I have already twice assured you—"

"Quite. Quite. Excuse me." John jerked to his feet. "I'll look at the Michauds later to-day or to-morrow, M. Volaille. Thank you. Thank you. Good-bye."

"But the statue! We have not even yet discussed the price."

"To-day. To-morrow. I really must be going. Good-bye. Thank you. Thank you. Good-bye!" He ran into the street.



He was sitting on a bench in the Tuileries Gardens, his head in his hands. There were children everywhere. Babies asleep in carriages. Toddlers chasing balls. Boys and girls rolling hoops and playing tag. Urchins leap-frogging. Then it was lunch-time and there were no children. He did not move.

Again there were children everywhere, shouting, screaming, laughing, crying, walking, running. Babies asleep.

The shadows of the horse chestnuts lengthened on the gravel. Lights brightened the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli. There were no children.

John rose. The little finger of his left hand clicked

against his palm. "I've got to do it," he said. He straightened his cramped shoulders. Then he smiled. "I want to do it!" he said.



He stood staring at a brass plate on a door in a dingy building on the Boulevard Haussmann: "Etude de M. Vault."

A heavy old gentleman, white hair above a red aquiline nose, came out the door.

"Is this the office of Mr. Vault?" John stopped him.

"I am Mr. Vault."

"My name's John Corsey."

"Rush Corsey's son!" Mr. Vault's hand came out with his smile.

"Grandson."

"Dear me, how time flies! Did you wish to see me? I'm so sorry. I'm just leaving for the day."

"I have to see you, now, sir."

"Dear me! Dear me!" He rapped on the door. An attendant opened it and John followed him to a little office walled with law reports. He sat down, leaned his finger tips together, and looked at John.

"I knew you were my grandfather's lawyer, Mr. Vault, and I knew nothing I said would go any further."

Mr. Vault waved a hand.

"I want to ask you . . . I want to ask you how long it takes here to be divorced."

"Residence established, then about six months, if the case is not contested."

A pause. Mr. Vault twirled his thumbs.

"That's no use," said John. "Can't it be done in one or two?"

"No."

"It has to be."

"Just like your grandfather," Mr. Vault chuckled.

"That's what made him president of the road."

"You can do it?"

"Well, Mr. Corsey, anything is possible. But I don't ordinarily have anything to do with such business."

"But you can do it."

"Just because I never take such business I—I might—I might just possibly. With our connections . . . Of course you have a Paris residence."

"No."

"Your wife has?"

"No. She's in England."

"Really, Mr. Corsey!"

"But you can."

"Some one in the office might be found to date a house lease a few months back and register it. And I just might be able to . . . Well, one has friends when one has lived as long as I have. Your wife must come at once. I take it she's as anxious as you to expedite matters."

"She will be, I think."

"Think?"

"She will be."

"When may I expect to have the pleasure of meeting her?"

"This is Friday. . . . We could be back here Monday evening."

"Say Tuesday morning at ten."

"Thank you, sir." John rose.

"My dear boy!" Mr. Vault heaved out of his chair and patted John's shoulder. "My dear boy, don't look so desperate. Just remember: there are as good fish in the sea . . . Come around to the club with me and have a glass of port."

"Thank you, sir, I've a letter to write before I take the train to London."

"It must be a long letter." Mr. Vault smiled.

"It will be," said John. "Good-bye."



He sat in the writing-room of the Meurice and wrote:

Nina, I found out to-day.

There's nothing I can say. You must *know*.

Nina, I'm on my knees to you. I kiss your hands, your feet. I beseech you, I implore you to understand.

I'm afraid. I've asked you so often to understand. But those weren't true things. And this is true. True as the thing you have inside you, Nina. True!

Nina, you're mine. And I'm yours. All yours. Every last drop of me. You gave me the only happy time of my life, Nina. But I don't just love you as I used to then. I worship you. You're so far beyond me, above me, so straight and brave and strong. Beautiful the way life is beautiful. Beautiful and terrible as life. And you are my life, Nina. You are. You can't say no. You're going to marry me. We're going to live in Paris. You're going to do work as great as your father's and I'm going to write. We're going to have life. Life together. And make it. Nina, you can't refuse me. You love me. You know you love me. I love you, Nina. I worship you. And we're tied, Nina. Tied by a knot you can't untie. It's my child. My child as much as yours.

Nina, I'm going now to London to get my wife. We'll be divorced in less than two months. It's going to be horrible for her. But nothing you can say or do can stop it. No power on earth can stop it. Before you get this letter I will have told her everything. Maybe you won't believe. Maybe in all our lives you'll never believe, but it's true, Nina: the thing that made me marry her was you, and the thing that made her marry me was you. You'd raised up such a fire of want in me that I had to, had to have some one. You were gone. I thought I had to have her. And the thing she loved in me, Nina, wasn't me. It was your fire. And now. The real me. I can't even warm her hands. That night—that horrible night when you came back and looked at me. Nina, I ran after you into the snow. I ran all over the city looking for you. But I never knew, I never thought one instant—Nina, it brought you back to me then. It's going to bring you back to me now. You can't refuse. You can't do that to a child. *Our* child. Even if you're ready to smash your life and smash mine you can't put that on a child. I won't let you. No matter what you say or do,

I'm going to marry you. You can't hide from me. I'll leave this letter with Volaille. If I haven't heard from you in a week, I'll scour the whole of Europe to find you. I'll get police, detectives. You know you can't hide from me. Leave your address with Volaille or at Morgan, Harjes. Before you get this letter my marriage will be finished. I'll be alone. You'll be alone. But we'll be tied, tied. You can't say no.

Nina, out of my heart's core I implore you to understand. I'm on my knees to you. I kiss your hands, your feet, your heart, and the child that's under it. I want you so. I need you so.

JOHN.

I have read this letter. It says nothing, nothing that I feel. I can't get through to words. You just have to *know*.

Nina I'm glad, *glad*.

JOHN.



The express from London halted at the little town of Oxlynn. John swung his luggage to the platform. A groom appeared. "Mr. Corsey?" "Yes." "Anything in the van, sir?" "No." The groom touched his hat, then turned and touched his hat again to a ruddy gentleman of sixty in loose tweeds.

"Anything in the van, Sir Patrick?"

"No. Just this." He swung a Gladstone at the groom. "I'm going up to London again to-night. The train's eleven-fifteen, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir. This way, sir."

Green eyes, jolly and small, peered out of the ruddy face at John.

"John Corsey." He held out his hand.

"Patrick Lanchester."

They followed the groom to a station wagon. The heavy coach horse leaned on his collar and the wagon rolled through a minute of seventeenth century town into the Norfolk plain. Then there were woods. A grouse flew across the road.

"Looks good for the twelfth," said John.

"You shoot with Sherbury?"

"No, I've never even been to Auburn before, but Lady Sherbury is my aunt."

"Dear Muriel! Irresistible. Come, and one comes. For nothing usually."

"You've shot at Auburn of course," said John.

"Never. Loathe it. I do enough butchery without that."

John looked at Lanchester's stubby red fingers. The carriage turned through a broad wrought-iron gateway flanked by lodges. At the end of a straight road rose the square mass of Auburn Hall, formidable as a prison. A herd of deer galloped away to the further oaks of the park.

"What an extraordinarily barren-looking house!" said John.

"It's the stairway. You see? There isn't any. He lost it gambling with Catherine the Great." Lanchester chuckled. "Then en route it sank in the Baltic. Palladian, you see, without the double outside stairway. A face without a nose. Almost syphilitic."

The carriage halted at a small square door level with the ground, bare as the postern of a jail. A butler and footmen appeared. John followed Lanchester into a cellar and up a thin dark stair. Suddenly they were in a room fifty feet high, all stone, imperial, above which hung a gallery adorned with busts of Roman Emperors.

"The old entrance hall, you see?"

"Your room, Sir Patrick," the butler captured Lanchester.

"This way please, sir," a valet summoned John.

He crossed the huge hall, passed through a salon of Vandykes, through a library of snuff-colored wood redolent of decaying calf and morocco. Then he was in a cube of carved mahogany. Floor, walls, ceiling, all unpolished snuff-colored wood. A bed built into the inner wall. The valet opened a panel. "Your dressing-room, sir. Mrs. Corsey is here." He opened a mahogany door.

"Will you change at once, sir? The ladies are at tea on the lawn."

"Thank you, not till dinner." John walked into Mildred's room.

A canopied bed hung with mauve damask. Walls of the same damask. Then he saw the marabou on Mildred's black velvet dressing-gown. Her ivory toilet things were on the dressing table. An odor of *muguet* came up from the dressing table. There was a gold hair clinging to the ivory comb.

"Lord God!" He covered his eyes with his hands.

"Yes, sir. What did you say, sir?"

"I'd like to wash my hands," said John.

On the unblemished side of the Hall the lawn was clasped by low curved pavilions from which it leaned away to an endless narrowing vista of woods. There was a bright spot in the shadow of the right pavilion. Tea. A dozen tweeds and organdies in deep wicker chairs. Lanchester was seating himself between Lady Sherbury and Mildred. John crossed the lawn. Mildred's hand flew up in welcome. She was wearing a broad hat of strawberry-stained straw. There were strawberry spots on the organdie of her dress.

"Dear John, so glad you've come at last!" His Aunt Muriel turned up her cheek.

"Good trip, John?" Sherbury held out his hand.

"Lady Highgate, Mr. Corsey, Mrs. Heather, Exmoor, Heather, Highgate, Sir Patrick."

"We came up together."

The light coming through the broad brim of the strawberry hat made Mildred's face the rosy visage of a child. He kissed her finger tips. She squeezed his hand. "Bad trip?" "Beastly." "Poor dear!"

"Lemon or cream, John?" He sat between Lady Highgate and his aunt.

"Thanks, neither lemon nor tea. That is . . ."

Chatter. Mildred's eyes weren't leaving his face. Scratched sapphires swimming in that rosy light. Ex-

moor was leaning close to her shoulder. Exmoor! Lady Highgate's slightly goitered Pre-Raphaelite throat was murmuring something about Longchamps at him. Mrs. Heather was announcing she had done the seventh in three. "Half the peerage will be mothered by Gaiety girls," drawled Sherbury. Laughter. Mildred's eyes weren't leaving him. His Aunt Muriel's hand was on his arm. "Bobby?" "I'll explain later."

"And now . . ." Lanchester's blunt fingers returned his cup to the table. Lady Sherbury rose. John's teeth grated. "Mildred, would you care to walk before dinner?" he said. She shook her head with a secret smile from him to Lady Sherbury.

"Mildred and I have an engagement." Lady Sherbury noosed him in another secret smile.

"Do, Mildred," he said.

She shook her head and squeezed his arm as she passed.

"I'm for a walk," said Mrs. Heather.

"And I as far as the garden," murmured Lady Highgate.

"Good," said John.

Lanchester was moving toward the Hall with Mildred and Lady Sherbury. The others were crossing the lawn toward the high wall of a garden. He joined Lady Highgate.

"Such an arrangement of blues and pinks and purples! Such a lovely idea to keep all whites out of a garden! Don't you think so, Mr. Corsey?" Lady Highgate's thyroid undulated "White flowers make such splotches. So garish. Almost vulgar."

"Who's Lanchester?" asked John.

"There's fame!" Mrs. Heather turned.

"But who?"

"He's been Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford for fifteen years and but for him the dear Queen . . . Well, we might have Lily Langtry in Buckingham Palace!" Mrs. Heather laughed.

"Let's really walk," said John.

"I'm ready for five miles before dinner. Any one else coming?" Mrs. Heather called. Murmurs. "Well, I warn you, your tailors will all have to add another half-inch this year."

There were grouse in the damp green alleys of the woods: grouse and soft spotted deer and little birds chattering and singing.

"Your wife tells me you're thinking of motoring in France. The Panhard's good but there's nothing like the Mercedes." Mrs. Heather poured knowledge of bore and stroke, jump spark and make and break ignition, carburetors, and cooling systems.

"What's Lanchester doing down here?" asked John.

"He's an old friend of Muriel's. Rather specially, I think, once. And he swears she calls him down every time one of the servants has a cold."

"But who's ill? Not Aunt Muriel? Not my wife?"

"I'd like to have her illness if she has one. I think she's divine, divine, Mr. Corsey! It isn't just her beauty. That amazing coloring! It's something inside: something so hard and aristocratic. She's so unlike most American girls. They're as soft and poury as bread pudding. She's like a whippy foil: spirited. You're in luck."

"Yes," said John.

They walked and walked and walked. There were points of merit also in the Renault, the Darracq, and the De Dion Bouton.

By way of the library John tiptoed to his room, and began to dress for dinner. Mildred was moving beyond the mahogany door. From time to time she hummed a bit of "Voi che sapete" and John covered his ears. There was a knock on the outer door. "Dinner is served, sir."

"Thank you."

"Oh, John! Are you there!" The mahogany door opened and Mildred stood in the doorway, a shaft of white satin. "I thought you were still walking. Why didn't you come in?"

"We just got back. Afraid I'd be late for dinner." He buttoned his waistcoat, turned to the mirror, and re-adjusted his perfectly adjusted tie.

A hand crept over his shoulder and when he turned her head leaned to him and her lips touched his throat.

"Dear Mildred, we'll be late." He reached for his coat.

Her eyes were puzzled and hurt. She walked ahead of him through the library, through the salon of Vandykes, into the huge hall. A dozen new faces. Titles. Bows. Arms and a procession to the dining-room. Candles. Five yards of linen and silver plate. Lady Highgate and Mrs. Heather again.

"And the Duke said: 'The only time my title embarrasses me is when I have to precede A.J.B. to dinner.' So democratic!"

"My dear, the Queen made every one walk through the rain and mud to kneel at John Brown's grave!"

Mildred's eyes across red roses, smiling, loving him, warm as if she had a secret light inside her.

"You haven't heard what Kitchener did to her! Of course, in spite of the siege, being a Churchill, she insisted on behaving as freely as if she were in London. And he'd issued an order forbidding civilians on the streets after dark. She was arrested twice by patrols. Then she deviled poor Fitzgerald day and night for a special permit. He wouldn't even ask K. Finally he did, and came back to her with a paper. K. had written: 'Permit this woman to walk the streets at night!'"

Guffaws. Chatter. Chatter. Chatter. Chatter.

A candle burning in the ruby on Mildred's finger, Chatter. Chatter. Chatter.

An eternity of food.

Mildred's eyes again.

Chairs scraping. The ladies sweeping out.

Port. Port. Port.

"Have you seen Blunt's Arabians at Crabbet?"

"My dear fellow, he was so full of champagne that

when he proposed the health of Her Majesty he called,
 "Gentlemen: The Queel!"

"I always prefer a dash of Hermit blood."

"The trouble with Lansdowne is . . ."

Cigars. Cigars. Cigars.

"Campbell-Bannerman is simply ignorant."

"But there's always A.J.B."

A.J.B. A.J.B. There's always A.J.B.

A.J.B. A.J.B. There's always A.J.B.

Eternity.

Sherbury rising. Music. A chrysanthemum of ladies dissolving into separate petals. A Strauss waltz. Aunt Muriel: "Do your duty, John. The Duchess." Shoulder blades and bony knees, knocking, knocking, knocking.

Exmoor bending over Mildred's chair. "Oh, I may, Aunt Muriel, just once!" Aunt Muriel's finger and head shaking a negative, oh, so playfully, oh, so playfully!

The "Blue Danube." Shoulder blades and bony knees, knocking, knocking, knocking.

"Now really, Mr. Corsey, you must leave me."

"Not I. You dance exquisitely." Shoulder blades and bony knees. Mildred not dancing. Mildred not dancing at all.

"But you're really not going, Sir Patrick."

"So sorry. Just time to change before the train."

John bowed to Mildred. "Will you dance, dear?"

"No, thanks, darling."

"You're feeling badly?"

"Not really." The scarlet thread of her lips parted as gently as an opening petal.

Lady Sherbury leaned over her chair. "Do run off to bed, dear child. You can just slip out. No one will notice."

"Perhaps I'd better." Mildred rose.

"I think I'll go, too, Aunt Muriel. I'm really awfully tired," said John.

"You dear, happy, happy children!" Lady Sherbury meshed him again with a smile.

Mildred took his hand. They walked through the salon of Vandykes, through the leather-musty library, through the cube of carved mahogany. He drew back to let her pass into her own room. He stepped quickly aside to his dressing-room. His breath was panting through his nostrils.

"Darling!" she called.

The little finger of his left hand clicked against his palm. He drew down his shoulders and walked through the mahogany doorway.

She was standing by the dressing table.

"Mildred! I have something to tell you."

"Poor Bobby! Is it that bad? You look—"

"It isn't—"

"John darling, I don't want to hear now! I don't want to hear anything until I've told you. Then you'll be happy, whatever it is." She was coming to his arms, a smile full of tears on her lips. "I'm having a—"

His breath hit the bottom of his lungs with a rending gasp.

"Aren't you glad?" Her hands were fixed in the air.

"Of course I am! Delighted!" he panted. "It's wonderful. Are you sure, Mildred? Are you sure?"

"Sir Patrick—"

"Of course. My darling! How wonderful!" He took her in his arms.

"You're not glad, John!" She stood away from him.

"I am. I am. I'm just—just a bit overwhelmed. So surprised. Astounded! Go to bed, dear, go to bed! I'll catch Sir Patrick; ask him—ask him how to take care of you. It's wonderful, dear, wonderful!" He ran.

The station wagon was starting. He called. The wagon stopped. He jumped in.

"Sir Patrick, are you sure?"

"Of course, my dear fellow. What's wrong? You're shivering."

"Nothing. Nothing. I'm just so surprised. Mildred's

just told me. And I want . . . I want to know . . . how to take care of her."

"It will take care of itself provided you see she drinks plenty of water and no alcohol. It's beautifully placed. Her pelvis might be a bit broader but with a good obstetrician she'll have no trouble."

"But are you—"

"My dear fellow, just remember it's not the first baby to be born in the world, and don't worry. Positively, you're more excited than she was."

"I'm sorry. I beg your pardon."

The wagon rolled past the lodge into the highroad. Oak limbs crossed the moon.

"Do you mind if I get out here, Sir Patrick? I'll walk back—walk back."

"Not at all." Lanchester rapped the glass behind the coachman. The wagon stopped. "Good night. Congratulations, and good luck."

"Thank you. Thank you." John got out. The wagon drove on. He watched the ruby bull's-eyes of the lamps until they disappeared. Then he lurched to the roadside and sat down on the grass.

The whistle of the express hooted. The lights of the station wagon reappeared. He got up and stood behind an oak trunk till they passed. . . . The leaves of the wood were whispering like frightened children. He sat down again. A little trickle of blood oozed to his chin from the spot on his lower lip which his teeth were gnawing. He drew out his handkerchief and wiped the blood away. His teeth began to gnaw again.

There were carriage lights coming down the road. Many lights. Many carriages. Many horses. He stood behind the oak trunk till they passed. The thud of the horses' feet mingled with the night whispers of the woods. A branch cracked. A deer scampered. A grouse whirred. A nightingale tried a few notes. He rose slowly and his little finger clamped. He wiped his chin and

walked along the road. He passed the iron grille. At the end of the straight drive rose the square mass of the Hall.

There was a goose-quill pen on the writing table in the library. He sat down and addressed two envelopes:

Registered

M. Volaille

47 Rue Lafitte

Paris, France

Recommandé

Mr. John Corsey

Care of Brown, Shipley & Co.

123 Pall Mall

London, England

Hold.

He took his wallet from his pocket, extracted a check, and wrote on the check.

Then he wrote:

DEAR M. VOLAILLE:

Will you please put the letter addressed to Nina Michaud, which I left with you, in the enclosed envelope and return it to me by registered mail *at once*.

Enclosed you will find my check drawn to your order on the First National Bank of Chesterbridge for \$20,200. Will you kindly cash this check and deliver twenty thousand dollars' worth of francs to Miss Michaud when next she calls on you? Please do not under any circumstances mention my name. She will not accept the money if you do. I should be obliged if you informed her that you were giving her the money yourself as an additional payment for her father's pictures. I trust you will accept the \$200 as payment for your trouble.

Very truly yours,

JOHN CORSEY.

He folded the papers and placed them in the envelope addressed to Volaille, and put the envelope in the inner pocket of his coat. He walked to his room.

The mahogany door was open.

"John?"

"Yes, dear."

"Oh, John, I've been waiting for you so long!"

He walked through the mahogany door to her bed and took her in his arms. The letter in his pocket crackled.



III

John Corsey, editor of the *Times*, sat in his office staring at a letter. He was dressed in the black of deep mourning. A crescendo chuckle burst through the doorway from the outer office. John shoved the letter into his pocket and looked up.

"My God, Corsey, I've got a corker!" B. Archibald Slemp displayed the whole platoon of his large white teeth. "The Milligan girl's done it again! You know how your smart cousin Paul got her ten-thousand-dollar verdict thrown out on a technicality. Well, the case came up again this morning and Mary was carried into court on a stretcher, stone paralyzed. She testified, and then your cousin produced exactly seventeen witnesses who had seen her washing floors and ironing and even stoking the furnace and dancing! After the first trial he'd hired the house next the Milligans' and got some holes made in the walls. He had her cold. And what do you think happened then?"

"I suppose they arrested her for perjury."

"The jury got so damned mad at the holes in the wall that they gave her twenty thousand dollars damages!"

"Bully for them!" John laughed.

"Wouldn't Schopenhauer have loved it!"

"But the money won't do her much good, will it, if she has to pretend to be paralyzed?"

"She'll be paralyzed just two days longer. To-night her brother's taking her on a stretcher to Canada."

"Skipping the country?"

"She's going to St. Anne de Beaupré to have a miracle!"

"Lord, how lovely!" John guffawed. "Go up on the

train with her, Slem্প, and write it fully: all details absolutely seriously. By Jove! The Club will laugh at Paul for a month, and if you handle it as solemnly as a parish priest our R.C. circulation will jump five thousand. Now run along."

"You can't beat the women, can you, son?" Slem্প chuckled out the door. "They nail you every time!"

John drew the letter from his pocket, looked down at it wearily, and reread:

47 Rue Lafitte, 10 January, 1900

Mr. John Corsey
Brown, Shipley & Co.
123 Pall Mall, London.

Dear Mr. Corsey:

At the request of Miss Michaud I send you the enclosed check of the Crédit Lyonnais for \$20,000. This morning for the first time since your departure I had the pleasure of a visit from Miss Michaud and I followed your instructions; but I regret to inform you that Miss Michaud said at once that she was aware whence the money came and, in spite of my efforts, refused to accept it and asked me to return it to you without delay.

I continue to hold for you the statuette of the horse which you admired. Will you have the goodness to let me know whether or not you still desire to purchase it? The price will be 500 francs and I consider it a rare bargain as Miss Michaud undoubtedly has a future as a sculptor.

Pray accept, sir, the assurance of my most distinguished consideration.

P. VOLAILLE.

He blew a long sigh, rose slowly, and walked to his outer office. A thin, brown stenographer jerked up from her typewriter and smiled till her protruding teeth showed yellow.

"I'm leaving for the day, Miss Sidel. Phone if I'm needed."

She whipped his coat off a clothes tree and plucked a bit of lint from the sleeve.

"Lint does show so dreadfully on black, Mr. Corsey."

"Thank you, Miss Sidel."

"Good night," she beamed. He went out. She listened to his receding footsteps and sighed.

He crossed from Purchase to Kernel Street and moved slowly past the dilapidated square. The bare branches of the trees were black in the early dusk. A light appeared on the opposite side of the square, in an upper window. He stopped and stared at the light. "At least I know she's still alive," he said. "I wonder if the baby is?" A gust of powdered manure stung his eyes and mouth. He spat, blew his nose, and hurried up Kernel Street.

The windows of Norman's flower shop were hot with red roses.

"Good evening, Mr. Corsey," a broad German face smiled under a skullcap.

"Good evening, George. Let's see what you have in the way of orchids."

"You'll find Mr. Norman showing them to Mr. Greville."

John walked to the back of the shop. His uncle Fulke Greville was adjusting his monocle and peering at branches of yellow and purple and white which Mr. Rattle, derby jammed over his ears, was extracting from a cold-room.

"Hello, Uncle Fulke!"

"Ah, John, delighted! You'll decide for me."

"Good evening, Mr. Norman."

"Good evening, Mr. Corsey."

"Norman's trying to persuade me that this dendrobium, being white, is not inconsistent with mourning and that I may continue to enjoy my boutonniere without disrespect to the memory of your father, though, by Jove, I'm thinking of abandoning it in any event. Chamberlain has made an orchid in one's buttonhole positively conspicuous."

"Send him the dendrobium, Mr. Norman. You'd not be yourself without an orchid, Uncle Fulke."

"You're sure your mother wouldn't feel . . ."

"Of course not. Now what have you for me, Mr. Norman?"

"Wonderful cattleyas to-day." Mr. Norman extracted a single green stem bearing eight purple blooms.

"Not those." John pushed them away and took a long spray of blue orchids from a vase. "This."

"Thank you, Mr. Corsey. Shall I send it?"

"I'll take it with me."

"For Mildred, then." Fulke Greville smiled as Mr. Norman moved away. "It's very soon now that she's—ah—that she's—ah—expecting . . ."

"Any day."

"Well, God bless her. I hope it turns out a son."

"So do I," said John.

"Ah, yes, naturally, ah." Fulke Greville turned back to the orchids. "The cattleyas really are extraordinary to-day, John. Why are you so averse to them?"

"Father," said John. "That's all I saw of him. That damned purple orchid pall. It was still on his grave when we got home."

"Oh, sorry, so sorry I asked! . . . Ah—you'll excuse me, John. I had no idea, ah."

"Of course."

Mr. Norman returned with a long box containing the blue spray and they left the shop together.

"Uncle Fulke, you won't mind my asking you. Would you make an effort to go out often to see mother? She won't see any one but ourselves, won't see any of her friends. I've tried to make her come in from Kingsale, but she says she'll never spend a night on the Square again, says she can't, in the room father . . . She wants to give me the house, says she can't bear to hear the chimes of St. Mark's."

"She's not found comfort there, has she?"

"Comfort! She's almost . . . She's always been so sure of God's benevolence and now—"

"She's discovered that the only one of his qualities of

which one can be quite certain is his slightly sadistic sense of humor."

"Don't say that to her."

"My dear boy!"

"Of course you wouldn't. But it's so close to true! Was there ever anything more undeserved than that! Father to die because he went on dressing his niggers when he'd cut his thumb! . . . Oh, well, I hope it will help mother some if we have a son. I wish to God I could really help her."

"You can't help more than that. After all, ah, that is the only consolation. One comes and one goes, but the family goes on. It's—ah—a sort of immortality." The lights of the Chesterbridge Club splashed the pavement at their feet. "Would you care to turn in with me and have a whisky and soda?"

"Thanks," said John, "I ought to get home to Mildred."

"My love to her, then, and good luck."

"Thanks. Good night." They lifted their hats and John hurried across the Square to his home. He opened the door quietly with his latchkey and walked up to his room. He unlocked the drawer of his writing table, took Volaille's letter from his pocket, and placed it in the back of the drawer where lay the undelivered letter he had written in the Meurice to Nina and her jade and silver bracelet.

He locked the drawer, unwrapped the branch of blue orchids, looked at it a moment, then walked down to the room which Mildred was occupying: his mother's room. He knocked.

"Come in."

She was standing in front of the Chippendale bureau, the black velvet of her dressing-gown drawn tight across her swollen body.

"How are you, darling?" He kissed her perfunctorily and gave her the orchids.

"How lovely!" Her long fingers caressed the blue

petals. Suddenly she dropped them, her hands clutched the edge of the bureau behind her, her head bent down to her left shoulder, and the muscles of her neck rose into ropes.

"Darling! What is it?"

Slowly her head rose and she smiled and panted, "Sorry."

"Mildred! It's started!" He took her in his arms. She held him off and said, "Two hours."

"Have you sent for Dr. Jape?"

She shook her head.

"Have you sent for your mother?"

"No."

"But you must!"

"I don't want her, John. It's a queer pain, a terribly lonely pain. And she'd want to be close to me and I can't . . . Oh, you know!" she smiled. "Mother would talk about her little girl, and understanding the pain, and wanting to bear it for me, and she'd become so horribly sentimental that I'd hate her."

"But she'll be so hurt. She's just waiting for this. She's given up going to the Hot Springs just to be with you."

"I know. But I've got a right not to entertain anybody to-day. She'll have to miss her Roman holiday."

"You go to bed. I'll send Pat right over to get Jape."

She shook her head. "It's easier if you move around."

He started for the door.

"Just stay a minute, John. There's something I want to . . . I want to say something to—" Her jaws locked, her straight lips twisted, and again her neck bent to her shoulder and her nails scratched the varnish of the bureau.

"Oh, Mildred, darling! I'm so sorry! It's so terrible!"

She shook her head slowly and her neck rose until it was erect and her held breath gasped from her. He took her in his arms, and again she held him away from her and shook her head.

"John! I want you to make me a promise." Her eyes were a blue vise clenching him.

"Darling angel, I'll—"

"No. Wait till you hear what it is." She looked a long time into his eyes.

"What is it?"

"I want you to promise me that if I . . . if anything happens to me and the baby lives, you'll . . . you'll never give it to her to bring up."

His mouth opened and he looked at her, speechless.

"Don't stand there with your mouth open, John. You look ridiculous. And you might as well promise me quickly. You've got to promise me!"

"Oh, Christ, it isn't that! Of course I promise you. I'll promise you anything! I'd never have seen her again anyhow. But what kills me, Mildred, is that I've hurt you so! You—you didn't?" His eyes trembled upward an instant toward the ceiling, above which stood his desk. "You didn't?"

"Didn't what?"

"Nothing. Oh, Mildred, you don't think I love her still? You can't!"

"I think you must. You weren't even happy when I started the baby."

"Mildred!" He covered his face with his hands.

"Now don't, John! It's not fair. I can't afford a scene now. Please don't talk any more. Just go away. You've promised; that's all I— Oh!" she groaned, and again her head turned down to her shoulder.

He stumbled to the door and down the stair calling, "Patrick!" The old valet appeared. "Pat, run around to Dr. Jape's. Tell Mary to phone the nurse. The baby's coming!" He reeled into the dining-room, gulped three fingers of the Oil of Joy, and sat in the dark library, his head in his hands. Then he rose and walked up to Mildred's room. She was standing by a window, looking out at the arc lights blinking between the black branches of

the trees in the Square. He stood still until she turned. "Mildred," he said, "I've been a swine, a horrible swine, all through. If . . . if you can forgive me . . . if only you can forgive me, I'll . . . I'll . . ." His left elbow clamped over his eyes. The front door slammed and a heavy step mounted the stairs. "This way, sir," Patrick's voice sounded.

"Pull up, John. It's Jape," said Mildred.

There was a knock on the door. "Come in," said Mildred.

"Well, well, so the little manny's knocking at the gate at last!" Dr. Jape rolled in, rubbing his fat hands, mouth cutting a jovial crescent across his double chins. "And how's the little lady? Much pain yet?"

"Not much," said Mildred.



John was seated on Mildred's bed, holding her hand. Her eyes were closed. Dr. Jape beckoned the nurse and they left the room.

"Mildred," John whispered. She opened her eyes. "Mildred! Will you begin all over with me from to-day? Can you forget what I've . . . and . . . Oh, darling, I want to get so close to you! I want to be as close to you as your baby is now. Will you try with me?"

She squeezed his hand and smiled.

"Oh, my darling!" He kissed her dry lips. Then she turned her face into the pillow, her body humped and writhed, and her nails cut into his hand.

Again she lay limp as if she were asleep.

Again her muscles rose and a cry writhed through her lips before she could stifle it in the pillow.

"Oh, Mildred, Mildred!" He held her in his arms. Slowly she relaxed and looked at him, looked at him as if from a great distance, as if she were miles away. "You'd better go, John dear," she said.

"No."

"Yes. You really make it hurt more. You look as if it hurt you, not me."

"I wish to God it did."

"No. No. Go away. Really, John. Your face. I can't stand it!"

"Very well, child. Good-bye, and God take care of you." He leaned to her lips. She turned her head away.

He tiptoed out of the room, trembling.



He sat in the library, listening. A cry, acid, mechanical, inhuman as the shrieking of a siren, rasped and rasped in agonized crescendos. He covered his ears with his hands; but the cry cut through his fingers until it scraped without cessation, filing, filing, filing. Suddenly there was silence.

"She's dead!" He fled upstairs and flung open the door of her room. "What's happened? What is it!"

"A son," smiled Dr. Jape.

"But Mildred!"

"Is he—nice—looking—John?" Mildred's eyes were closed and her lips made the words with an enunciation so exquisite that each word was round as a drop of water. "I'm—so—full—of ether—I can't—see—him—yet."

"Yannh!" came from the bed, and John looked down and saw his son: a huge mouth bellowing from a whirl of kicking legs and waving arms: a being overwhelmingly strong, utterly individual. "My God, he's my grandfather! Oh, he's beautiful, Mildred!"

"I'm—so—glad. . . . Now—maybe—you'll—really—love me."

He thrust his head into the ether fumes by her ear. "Oh, Mildred, don't you understand! We're really married now. We're really married at last."

An ineffably drunken smile lighted her face. He pressed his eyes into her shoulder so that Dr. Jape might not see that he was crying.

"You'd better leave now," said Dr. Jape. "It's time we cut the cord."



"Praise God from whom all blessings flow!" John, swinging a Malacca stick and singing, was walking out the front door when a short blond lady aflutter with mauve draperies under an open sealskin coat appeared suddenly on the steps followed by a tall gentleman whose brown walrus mustaches swept to the brims of his ruddy jowls.

"John! Why didn't you let me know! How's Mildred? And the baby? Oh, John, it was terrible of you not to . . . Just think of that poor girl suffering her pain without her mother to be with her and comfort her! And after I'd given up the Hot! It was cruel of you, John, cruel to her and to me! I'll—"

"Awfully sorry, Mrs. Ashley! I was so upset I just forgot everything."

"But didn't Mildred tell you to send for me?"

"Of course, but, I'm sorry, I forgot."

"How could you!" She swept into the house. "Where's my darling baby?"

"He's a corker, Mr. Ashley," John grinned. "Rush Corsey."

His father-in-law pumped his hand and grinned back, speechless.

"And Mildred was wonderful. No trouble at all. A little tear, Jape says, but nothing serious. Go right up, will you? I'm off to the office for a moment, then out to the country to get mother."

"My regards to her." Mr. Ashley found words at last.

"Thanks. Good-bye." John ran down the steps and crossed the Square, humming. His eyes swung from the Georgian brick of Theodore's house to the white marble steps of the Ashleys' and thence to the limestone front of the Club and the near-by marble steps of his Uncle Fulke's. "By God, it's the nicest place in the world!" he shouted.

He bounced down Purchase Street to the *Times* office.

"Morning, Miss Sidel," he grinned. "Got an item to-day for Mrs. Dandridge's column."

"Oh, Mr. Corsey!" she quivered.

"It's a boy."

"Oh, Mr. Corsey, I'm so glad!" Her eyes were bright with tears. He patted her hand.

"Now get your book. I'm off to the country but there's a letter I want to dictate at once."

He glanced at the mail on his desk, humming. Miss Sidel darted in.

"And Mrs. Corsey?"

"Wonderfully well. Luck, isn't it?"

"Providence," she sighed.

"First just a personal note, Miss Sidel. One copy. Not for the office file. Monsieur. That's just capital *M*, period. V-o-l-a-i-l-l-e. Four seven Rue L-a-f-i-t-t-e, Paris. Dear M. Volaille: I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of January 10 with enclosure. Many thanks. I do not want the horse. Very truly yours."



Rush Corsey, nine months old, crawled across the floor of his mother's room to the long mirror in the wall, rose painfully to his knees, smiled, said "Da" to the child in the mirror, then pressed his open mouth against the mouth in the glass.

"Isn't he wonderful!" John drew Mildred down to the sofa and kissed her.

"And you're really happy now, John, aren't you?" Her quiet smile turned from her son to her husband without alteration.

"Of course I am, you angel!" he squeezed her hand. "And now that you've weaned Rush we're going to be happier than ever. I'll get you back again: out of his clutches. I've almost begun to be jealous of him."

"I don't like you to say that, John."

"Why not?" he smiled. "It's true. I want you. All of you. Not just what he leaves over. I want to be your lover again with nobody to separate us."

"But he's never separated us. He's made us really married, really one."

"That's just the reason we have to become lovers again. He's tied us together for life, 'till death do us part,' old thing, however depressing you may find the thought. And that's a long time and if we're to love each other all through, we've jolly well got to remember that we're lovers first and parents second. And that's why I'm going to move down to your room to-night." His arm went around her waist and his fingers found her breast. "Now will you please say you're glad?"

"But, John, you don't mean. . . ." She grew suddenly tense. "John, I don't want to start another baby so soon! I'm too tired."

"Why start?"

"Well, one does, you know," she smiled defensively.

"Jape can give you—" The disgust in her face twisted his sentence. "Or I—"

"But all that's so disgusting! So horribly . . . arranged. Unnatural!"

"Of course it's disgusting, but it's considerably less unnatural and less disagreeable than living as we've lived these last months."

"Then you haven't been really happy?"

"Of course I've been happy, but I've been tortured too. And I won't wait any longer, Mildred. . . . Don't you want me at all?"

Her teeth caught her lower lip. "Not yet," she said.

"Oh, well, if that's the way you feel." He rose, shrugged his shoulders, and walked out.



He heard the clock on the stairs strike one. He heard the clock on the stairs strike two, then three, then four.

He got out of bed and groped down the dark stair to Mildred's room. His hand felt up the jamb and turned the knob. The door was locked.



"Mildred, why did you lock your door last night?" She did not answer. "I came downstairs and tried your door, Mildred." A pause. "Did you hear me?"

"Yes. I did."

"Thanks," he said, and started toward the door.

"No, John, don't go away!" He turned back. She was looking at the floor and twisting her fingers. "Oh, it's so hard to work things out!" she said. "I thought when Rush was born you'd be happy. I thought you were happy. You said he made you happy, and made us really close for always; and now . . ."

"I meant it. I mean it. Having him does make me happy. And he's really tied us; married us the way the church pretends to marry one and doesn't; sanctified our marriage, if you like. And no matter how much you may want to get out of it some day—"

"Oh, John, don't say that again! Yesterday you—"

"Well, it does happen, you know. You may or I may. But I won't and I won't let you. We're a family now, tied up by him. And we've got to live with each other and we've got to see to it that we do live and don't just exist. Do you understand? I'm not going to be unfaithful to you ever and you're not going to be unfaithful to me. So if we're to have any love, any passion, in our lives we've got to find it in each other. And don't forget love's a thing that's mighty easy to kill and easier to let die and you have to fight for it if you want to keep it alive and you're—"

"But I do love you, John, more than ever, only . . ."

"Only what?"

"Can't you understand? Whenever I think of—of that—it means just one thing: another baby, another sickening nine months carrying him, another horrible

day, and another nine months of drain and drain and drain nursing him. I don't want that yet. I've got a right not to want something as much as you have a right to want it."

"You don't need to have a child."

"But that's so horribly ugly! Can't you be patient with me a little while? Can't you wait just a little while?" Her voice was pure and plaintive as a child's. And her white face turned up to him was like a nun's.

"I guess I can," he said.



"You must, my dear. It's sacrilege not to. My last magnum of '64 Lafitte!" Fulke Greville smiled at Eleanor Corsey, who sat on his right, and she withdrew her hand and Silk poured a few mouthfuls of the incomparable Médoc into her glass.

"Fulke, have you heard? Leather's caught at last!" The pear-shaped pearls dangling from the sagging lobes of Aunt Gertrude Carrollton's ears danced. Fulke Greville's monocle skated down the icy finish of his shirt bosom.

"Embezzlement? Forgery? Or plain theft?"

"Worse. Marriage."

"To whom?"

"The Demicuzene woman."

"Not Strozzi's!"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Secretly in Paris!" Aunt Gertrude sat back in her chair and the pearls danced another goat-foot dance.

"Alice!" Fulke, summoning the attention of the table, directed his voice across the pink rose centerpiece toward Mrs. Corsey. "Have you heard? Leather's married Lydia Demicuzene!"

"Not Strozzi's!"

"Yes!"

Fourteen varieties of laughter set the candle flames flickering, but they straightened again when Mrs. Dan-

dridge purred: "I know her personally. I met her at one of Strozzi's musicales—after he'd married her." The end of Mrs. Dandridge's tongue moistened her full red lips as she savored the expectant silence. At eighteen Sarah Fairfax had married Peyton Dandridge. Before she was twenty-three he had gambled away her fortune. When she was twenty-nine he had developed locomotor ataxia. When she was thirty-five she had put him out of harm's way in an asylum and taken charge of the weekly book page of the *Times*. Behind this literary screen she superintended the Society Column of the *Times* and contributed the page of Sunday gossip which was headed "Martha Washington's Musings."

"Well, Sally, if you're going to keep us waiting all night I may as well tell the rest of my news." Aunt Gertrude Carrollton, from the eminence of her eighty years, swooped and captured Mrs. Dandridge's cherished pause.

"More!" Mrs. Corsey exclaimed.

"A letter from Paris. All the details."

"Where did he meet her?"

"A month ago at Longchamps. She was walking in the paddock with one of those Chicago butcher millionaires. Leather saw her and he turned to the man he was with and said, 'Do you know that lady?' And the other man said: 'Yes. Why? Do you want to meet her?' And Leather said: 'Yes. That's the woman I'm going to marry.'"

"*Quel imbécile!*" Mrs. Dandridge made a thrust for the attention of the table, but Aunt Gertrude swept majestically on her way:

"Four days later Cartier delivered a diamond to her that is twice the size of the Hope! A week later Cartier sent her three tiaras from which she was to choose. And she said they were all so lovely she couldn't choose and could she keep them all? And she kept them! And Leather loved it!"

The candle flames flickered again. "But who is she?" cried Mildred Corsey, and Mrs. Dandridge leaned past

the intervening form of Theodore, spread her fingers, and said: "*Qui sait? On dit . . . Ah, yes! On dit.*"

"What?" burst John across the table.

"Well, of course no one really knows and I rather hesitate—her story's not exactly *jeune fille*." Mrs. Dandridge smiled up the table toward Eleanor Corsey.

"Oh, do go on, Mrs. Dandridge! I won't have you stop on account of me. If I'm not married, I will be in a month!" Eleanor's eyes turned from Mrs. Dandridge to her fiancé, Wayne Sinclair, who sat at Mrs. Corsey's right. He was stroking his black mustache and gazing steadfastly at the tablecloth. He continued to gaze at the tablecloth.

"I'll leave the room if you like." Eleanor withered in his emanation of disapproval.

"Nonsense! Go on, Sally!" Aunt Gertrude snorted. "And after this preamble you'll have to be highly spiced not to bore us."

"*Quelle méchante!*" smiled Mrs. Dandridge. "Well, Lydia Demicuzene is said to have been born in Siberia, but her first public appearance was as a music-hall singer in Moscow. A very minor singer in a very low hall, I believe. She was that when she married Demicuzene—or says she married him. *Qui sait?*"

"Not likely," said Aunt Gertrude. "A Demicuzene! Not likely."

"Why not? They're rather less than nothing." Miss Tarrington on John's left exuded her inevitable drop of acid. A virgin of fifty, she wrote tart little essays for the *Atlantic Monthly*, wore a cross of old mine diamonds on the front of her black silk dress and opened her mouth only to emit an epigram or a denigrating fact. "The first Demicuzene was the first traitor to the Christian cause in the East. He sold the Turks their first fortress on the European side of the Hellespont. And the modern Demicuzenes haven't even the honor to be descended from him."

"At least he was a catch for a street . . . singer." Mrs.

Dandridge dug her audience from under the weight of Miss Tarrington's contempt. "But for some reason she divorced him, or he divorced her. Then she went to Paris and . . . well, she sang in the cafés of Montmartre, and one knows what that means."

"She has a voice?" Morgan Stanley, President of the Chesterbridge Opera Association, emerged from his habitual dormouse torpor.

"None. None whatever. And that's the most curious thing about her. She's mad to sing. And in opera. She studies endlessly, pursues the managers, and never appears. The night of the performance she invariably develops a cold. I've heard she did sing once in Italy and the audience rose to her—with eggs."

"Oh!" said Morgan Stanley, and relapsed with a little sigh of satisfaction that he had made his contribution to the evening's conversation.

"She sounds interesting," said Fulke Greville. "I wonder why the poor devil wants to go on singing if she has no voice."

"Obviously she hopes to become a great artist and thus attain moral oblivion and social position. One forgives a Bernhardt, a Duse, a Nordica, an Eames. A past is a prima donna's prerogative." Miss Tarrington's acid mouth pursed.

"Go on, Sally. What then?" ordered Aunt Gertrude.

"Then she—" Silk entered with champagne. "*Pas devant les domestiques.*" Mrs. Dandridge shook her head.

"Go on, Sally," said Fulke. "If there's any scandal Silk and Harrison don't know about any of us, it's because they've had the courtesy to forget it."

"Oh, Fulke, *comme tu es méchant!*" giggled Mrs. Dandridge. "Well, if you will: Lydia Demicuzene was then brought to New York by a gentleman; a gentleman to whom she was not married. And after a few months he turned her off, virtually penniless. Then she showed how much she'd learned in Moscow and Paris. She didn't economize. She leased a big house on Fifth

Avenue, spent the remainder of her money for clothes, and started to entertain madly until her credit gave out. Just before it did, some one took her to Strozzi's. Of course the old man's brain had softened. He'd already spent half the million he'd made by his electric battery. Lydia Demicuzene came into his music room. You all know the rest. He did die after taking a bichloride tablet. I don't say she gave it to him."

"She must be fascinating!" said Mildred. "Have you really seen her? Is she beautiful?"

"Not especially; but very tall and carries herself superbly."

"Poor Leather!" said John. "He must reach almost to her armpit."

"I can see her!" bubbled Eleanor. "Brilliant black eyes and blazing warmth."

"On the contrary, my dear, she's blonde, her eyes are rather pale blue, and she appears to be as cold as a steel knife," said Mrs. Dandridge.

"Cold as a courtesan," said Miss Tarrington.

"But she has a fine, full figure and beautiful white teeth," Mrs. Dandridge enunciated meticulously, displaying her own delicate dental equipment.

"Aaah!" John Collingwood, whose bald head shone at Mrs. Corsey's left, blew a long sigh. The emanation commanded instant attention; for John Collingwood—whether because he carried a miniature copy of the Constitution always in his waistcoat pocket, or because he was the only gentleman in Chesterbridge who remained a steadfast Democrat though he was never quite able to bring himself to vote for the Democratic candidate, or because he invariably referred to Abraham Lincoln as "That scoundrel," or because he refused divorce cases and most other business brought into his musty office, or because he never spoke a witty word or a profound one—was the final repository of Chesterbridgian *mores*: a Pope. "At least she's the end of Leather," he pronounced.

"End of him!" Aunt Gertrude snorted down the table. "John, I'll wager you the first bunch of asparagus from my garden against the first from yours that before Mr. Norman makes our purple orchid palls, you and I shake hands with Mr. and Mrs. Leather at the Concourse."

"My dear Gertrude, a woman of Montmartre and an office boy!" Mr. Collingwood had spoken.

"Really, Gertrude, you can't imagine them being accepted socially in Chesterbridge! New York, perhaps, but not Chesterbridge!" Mrs. Dandridge wore the mantle of Martha Washington.

"I can imagine it without the slightest difficulty. The day the MacMahons were admitted to the Concourse, Chesterbridge society ceased to exist." Aunt Gertrude was Catherine the Great ordering an execution.

"*Ah non! Ça c'est un peu trop fort!*" protested Mrs. Dandridge, who for many years had received the discarded dresses of Mrs. MacMahon and had the use of her victoria and her box at the opera. "MacMahon after all became our leading banker even though his father was a hardware merchant. And he was perfectly respectable."

"And Leather has succeeded him as the dominant partner in MacMahon and Company. And if that Demicuzene woman gives him a litter of brats"—Aunt Gertrude paused ominously—"you'll all find your children and grandchildren running after them. And you'll like it! Consider them good matches!"

"And why not?" Wayne Sinclair's dark eyes tilted defiantly around the table. "There's no place for snobbery in America. Leather's as good as any of us. What are we? Not aristocrats. *Haute bourgeoisie*. Or if you like," he inclined his head toward Miss Tarrington, "*la bourgeoisie intellectuelle*." There was a slight frozen crackle of shirt-fronts. Silk's hand trembled and a fleck of champagne foamed on the cloth. "I mean—I mean—well, whether or not we've had statesmen and diplomatists and generals among our ancestors, we're all the

descendants of one successful business man or another. So is everybody else who counts in America. It's silly to pretend we're aristocrats or that Chesterbridge society means anything except snobbery. We're business people who've had money for several generations, that's all."

A silence.

"I fear, my dear Wayne, that you are in a minority of one," said Fulke Greville.

Blood blazed theatrically under Wayne's high cheekbones. "I can't help it," he said. "You'd all agree with me if you could see yourselves dispassionately. I'll give you an equation. Chesterbridge is to London as Brisbane, Australia, is to Chesterbridge. We're colonials, that's all, who've made a bit of money and built up our own brand of snobbery. I think Chesterbridge is absurd. We old Chesterbridgians know no one in the whole, huge city but the people who live in an area four blocks by eight surrounding our holy Square. Not one of us will receive a manufacturer, although all the wealth of the city comes from them and most of the people one knows live on them. We're their lawyers, doctors, bankers, and brokers. And can any one tell me why it's respectable for us to own coal mines and to deal in coal but not to manufacture saws or rope or carpets or linoleum?"

"Dear Wayne," Mrs. Corsey laid a hand on his arm, "it's not what one does but how one does it. There are certain things no gentleman will do; practices quite within the law which people who aren't gentlemen will countenance. A gentleman is a man who won't do that sort of thing, although it may be both legal and to his advantage."

"A gentleman is a man one can be sure of. You may be able to break him, but you can't make him bend." John Collingwood spoke on a matter of faith and morals, infallibly.

"It's a matter of private manners and morals: a code: a code of conduct for the whole area that's outside the law," said Fulke Greville. "And it's much stricter than

the law, and finer. An aristocrat is a man who holds to that code. Fillender, Yenks, Roediger, and the manufacturers don't. Leather?" He shrugged his shoulders.

"And Chesterbridge society does," said Mrs. Dandridge.

"That's just what it doesn't," trumpeted Aunt Gertrude. "And that's just what I meant when I said that Chesterbridge society ceased to exist the day we admitted the MacMahons to the Concourse. You're all muddled. You don't distinguish between society and aristocracy. Of course we have an aristocracy. Wayne's an ass. And of course our aristocracy has a code. And we had a society just so long as we received socially the people who held that code and no others. The day we received the MacMahons because they were the richest people in town and able to give the most entertaining balls, our society ceased to exist. Their society began. They'll never be aristocrats, but society: they are society! God bless me, look at Newport to-day! Thank Heaven we're not that low yet! Our society's gone, but we still have the remnants of an aristocracy."

"I don't admit it," said Wayne.

"Dear Wayne," Mrs. Corsey intervened, "you do know, don't you, that nothing on earth could persuade John to express an opinion in the *Times* in which he did not believe? or to suppress news for money? or to employ information for blackmail or to further his personal ambitions? Why do you know that?"

"I know John."

"And thus you admit our entire argument. John is a gentleman. Therefore he has a certain integrity. No Corsey could do that sort of thing. A Leather might."

"Not Leather," Theodore Corsey protested. "I've had a lot of dealings with him, mother, and he's one of the finest, ablest men I've ever met. I don't believe the gossip about his wife, and Pauline and I will, I am sure, receive her. Won't we, Pauline?"

"Certainly, if you wish, dear," Pauline dutifully opened her tight little mouth and closed it.

"And I hope you'll see to it, John, that there's never any scandalous suggestion in the *Times* about Mr. Leather's marriage. It's not only that he's the minority stockholder. He's my friend."

"We don't ordinarily print scandal, do we, Theodore?"

"Sometimes you come pretty close to it." Theodore held his eyes away from Mrs. Dandridge so resolutely that every one looked at her.

"That's enough, children!" Mrs. Corsey rose.

"But first you must allow me to propose the health of Eleanor and Wayne." Fulke Greville checked the departure of the ladies and raised his long-stemmed glass. "Eleanor, my darling, may you have a long voyage and fair winds and a smooth sea, and may you come at last to a harbor of felicity where Leathers cease from troubling and Roedigers are at rest."

Mrs. Corsey carried the ladies to the drawing-room. The cloth was removed. The Madeira went round in silence.

"Good God, Wayne, not counterclockwise!" Fulke Greville waved at the decanter.



"Oh, John, you do like Wayne, don't you?" He had stopped at Eleanor's door on his way to bed.

"Yes. I like him."

"That means you don't."

"I do but . . ."

"But what?"

"Are you utterly sure you love him, Eleanor?"

"I adore him."

"That's what I feared."

"What do you mean?"

"It doesn't do to worship human beings. They're not gods. And when one finds they're not: Pouf! out goes the altar light."

"What on earth are you trying to say, John?" she giggled.

"There's no use trying to explain," he said. "Good-night."

"No, you don't!" As he stooped to kiss her she caught his arms. "You'll explain now. I can't bear for you and Wayne not to be friends. And you ought to love him, John. He's so like you. He has the loveliest ideals. He's like a Galahad!"

"That's just what I don't like. He's always so damned democratic and charitable in his talk. One always feels that because he's in politics he's afraid everything he says will be repeated and published. He's too damned noble to be true. And if he's that way when he's only an assistant district attorney he'll be—"

"That's not true, John! Not a word of it! He's wonderful! Wonderful! And as true as steel! Don't you think it took courage to stand up against every one at dinner to-night? He's—he's—" Her lips began to quiver.

"Sorry, Eleanor. I hope to God I'm wrong, because I don't want to be hanged and I'll certainly cut his throat if he doesn't make you happy." He smiled apologies. "Sorry." She would not smile back at him. "Forgive me, Eleanor. Yes. Quickly now. Darling, I'm only so afraid that after a year or so you'll find yourself up against divorce as poor Bobby is."

"But his wife is horrid, cold as a stone. Wayne is—"

"And still he worshiped her."

"But I don't just worship, Wayne. I do love him, John: I do."

"How do you feel about him?"

"I love him. You must know what that's like. He—just the sound of his voice or to touch his hand—he makes me . . . makes me suffer, suffer deliriously."

"That sounds like the real thing. Good night, you dear infant." He kissed her cheek.

As he stepped into the dark hall a candle appeared on

the landing above and Mildred whispered down to him: "Darling! Do come up and look at Rush."

His son was sleeping with the ear of a woolly white dog clasped to his lips. The candlelight flickered over his fat, chapped cheek. John stooped and kissed him and Rush smiled.

They tiptoed to the stair. John's arm crept around his wife's waist. They walked down the stair. He kissed her neck. "Lord, I am grateful to you, Mildred!" he said. They reached her door and stood together breathing quietly, her head against his throat. "Don't you think it's about time we had another like Rush?" he said.

"Yes," she whispered.

"Oh, my angel!" He blew out the candle.



Rush Corsey was four years old. It was Sunday morning.

"There," said Mildred, licking an envelope and pressing it with a little thump of her fist on the library table. "That's done."

John looked up from the blanket of Sunday newspapers which covered his knees.

"I hope you've managed to invite a few new people. I'm so sick of seeing the same twenty faces every time we go out to dinner or give a dinner that I feel like throwing plates."

"Who is there new to invite? The Leathers?"

"I'm not bored enough for that yet. By the way, Mrs. Dandridge reports they're giving another ball."

"Yes. I have the invitation here."

"Why don't you answer it? You're not thinking of accepting, are you?"

"Certainly not. We'll leave that to Theodore and Pauline. Did Pauline tell you about the last one?"

"Yes. Horrible splurge. Imagine sending to South America for live butterflies!"

"And the vulgarity of having Caruso and Sembrich and Genée all the same night!"

"And gold cigarette cases as favors for the men and diamond wrist watches for the ladies! It's simply a not very delicate form of bribery! By the way, I understand Genée was wonderful. We must go over to New York and see her dance."

"I'd love to."

The front doorbell rang.

"That'll be Rush," said John. He rose and the papers cascaded to the floor.

"Oh, John! Please don't always throw the papers on the floor."

"What difference does it make? There are plenty of servants to pick them up." He walked to the front door.

Mlle. Lamballe, Rush's governess, stormed in. "I will not take care of him another day! I will not!" she poured torrentially. "He will not obey me all the morning and—"

"But where is he?" asked John.

"At last he tells me he is old enough to take care of himself, tells me I am dismissed. And, when I take his hand, he kicks me! I am dismissed! I leave the house to-day!"

"But where's Rush?"

"I left him in the Square."

"You shouldn't have done that, Miss Lamballe. He might be run over crossing the street," said John.

"It would serve him right!" Miss Lamballe flounced upstairs.

"What!"

"Oh, John, there's only this street," Mildred intervened.

"At least he'll be horribly frightened being left alone."

"It will be good for him. He'll learn he can't talk that way to Miss Lamballe."

"I'm going after him."

"John, I ask you please not to. You're spoiling Rush

outrageously. I can't control him at all because you excuse everything he does. I ask you please not to."

"All right," said John, and walked to a window of the yellow music room and looked across the Square, searching for the sailor coat and hat of his son. Mildred sat at the piano and after a few preliminary chords swung into a Mendelssohn song without words. John drummed on the windowpane. Mildred stopped playing.

"Mildred, I wish you'd not put off any longer going to see Jape."

"All right, dear, I will."

"But I mean it. Go to-morrow. You've promised so often and never gone. And it's perfectly obvious that there must be something wrong with you. It's two years now since we started trying to have another child and there must be—"

"All right, John. You don't have to say it again."

"But you don't go. And it's so horribly important. Just imagine if Rush should be run over and killed."

"Don't say such a thing."

"Why not face it? What would be left of our lives?"

A pause.

"Ah! There he is!" The sun sparkled on Rush's new leather leggings as he ran homeward. At the edge of the Square he halted while a trolley clashed past. He started forward. An automobile horn honked on Pleasant Street. He drew back, afraid. The automobile passed. Rush closed his fists, dashed across the street, and rang the bell frantically. John opened the door, took his son in his arms and kissed him. Rush's face was wet. Mildred unbuttoned the brass buttons of his coat, questioning, "Why, Rush, where's Miss Lamballe?"

"She came home."

"And what's the matter with mother's little boy? He's been crying."

John coughed violently.

"I haven't been crying," said Rush.

"Why, Rush, your face is all wet!" Mildred said.

John coughed again.

"It rained."

"Rush! How can you tell such—"

"I noticed it had showered." John's voice was menacing. Mildred stared at him, then turned to her son. "Rush," she said, "Miss Lamballe told us what happened. You will go upstairs at once and apologize to her, beg her pardon, ask her please to stay with you. And you will have no ice cream to-day for telling me a lie."

"Father—" Rush began.

"*Tu m'as compris!*" Mildred demanded.

"Yes, mother." Rush walked upstairs, his shoulders jerking.

John turned to Mildred. "God, Mildred, you are the damndest!"

"Luncheon is served, madam," Pounder announced.

"I'm lunching at the Club." John took his hat and crossed the Square.



He played sniff all afternoon, dined at the Club, and played sniff again. When he walked home it was midnight. He crept up to his old room on the third floor. The bed was not turned down, for he had been occupying the room below with Mildred. He jerked off the bedspread and stood looking at the bed. "No, damn it, I mustn't!" he said, and walked down to Mildred's room and turned the knob of the door. The door was locked.



He walked into Mildred's room grinning conciliation. She was breakfasting in bed. He stooped to kiss her. She averted her face.

"I'm sorry, Mildred. I beg your pardon." She did not look at him. "Mildred, I've said I'm sorry and apologized." He paused. She did not raise her eyes. "What more do you want me to say?" He paused again. "Hell!

It's your own fault if you've had a bad night. I came last night to apologize. Why did you lock your door?" She looked at him. "Well, why did you? Did you mean you want me to stop sleeping in your bed?"

"I meant I couldn't bear to see you last night."

"Why not?"

"After you'd insulted me before the servants, left me alone for lunch and dinner, made Miss Lamballe give notice, and taught Rush to expect your approval even of a lie."

"That's a rather complete indictment. You must have spent some time compiling it."

"Please go away." She turned her face to the wall.

"Thanks." He walked to the door. His fingers were on the knob when suddenly he laughed, locked the door, and turned. "Good God, Mildred! This is you and I! Mildred Ashley and John Corsey bickering like a couple of mill hands! For Lord's sake let's pull up!" He moved to the bed smiling, hands lifted to her face. "Mildred!"

"No, John, I can't. You really hurt me." She held him away.

"I'm sorry, Mildred. I've said I'm sorry. What do you care if that damned Frenchwoman goes?"

"It's not that. It's Rush. You're trying to win him away from me: make him think I'm cruel: make him stop loving me."

"You're crazy!"

"You know it's true! You expect me to teach him to behave, teach him manners, discipline him, develop his character. I do. Then you sympathize with him, no matter what he does, make him feel you really understand him and I don't; make him feel as if you and he were leagued together against me. It's not fair!"

"Do you really think I've been doing that? I swear to you I haven't meant to! I'm terribly, terribly sorry if it's true. I promise I never intended . . . You do believe me! Don't you, Mildred?"

"I don't know."

"But you have to believe me! It's just—just that I remember my own childhood so well . . . how much mother made me suffer by making me think I was bad. I don't want Rush to suffer that way, and . . ."

"And you think I make him suffer."

"Not intentionally. You just don't understand how horribly sensitive he is, or how hard he tries to be good."

Again she turned her head to the wall. "So you think I'm a failure as a mother also."

"Good God, no! You're a wonderful mother. Lord knows you never think of any one on earth but Rush. And why did you say 'also'?"

"Well, you've made it fairly obvious for some time that you think I'm a failure as a wife."

"That's not true, Mildred! I never said that."

"But you always want me to be different than I am."

"Not different. Never different. I want you to be just yourself but . . . but to love me more . . . harder."

She spread her long fingers. "And that's so impossible, John. One has one's way of loving as one has one's way of breathing. One can't change. I love you all I can."

"I know you do, dear child; but it's all you can only because you've never wanted to learn to love more."

"Learn?"

"Yes. You'd never have ridden the way you do if you'd said at the beginning, 'One has one's way of riding as one has one's way of breathing.' You worked like the devil to develop good hands and a good seat. You might have learned to be a better lover."

"Who'd have taught me? Do you mean you wish I'd had lovers before you?"

"I wouldn't have cared if you'd learned from the experience."

"Wasn't it even a little pleasant to have me ignorant, to teach yourself?"

A pause.

"No. Because I could never even make you want to learn."

"When did you ever try to teach me?"

"Oh, good God! All the first months! The first years! But you—you . . ."

Again her fingers spread. "I couldn't help it, John."

A pause.

Then her voice, liquid and plaintive as a flute: "Can't you teach me now?"

A silence.

"I don't know," he said.

"Why not?"

"I wish to God I could, but . . . I don't know. . . . Something's gone out of me. . . . I'd have no more hope. . . . I tried so long and now . . . Oh, now that we've talked, it would all seem so made to order. Even if . . . Can't you see I'd just know it was my own caresses memorized and repeated to me? I don't want that. I want the makings of your own desire: you. I can't. If you're ever to learn now, you'll have to teach yourself. You'll have to imagine for yourself, find things out of your own wants. I wish to God you could."

A silence.

"I'll try," she said, and looked up into his eyes with so pure a loveliness in her face that suddenly he kneeled and put his lips into her open palm. She stroked his hair. For a long time he did not move.

"So will I," he said.



When he returned from the office that evening Mildred was sitting in the red plush armchair by the library table.

"Dear John, what shall I give you for your birthday?" She rose and kissed him. "I've just been through your drawers and you have six dozen silk handkerchiefs, at least a hundred cravats and seventy pairs of socks and I haven't the slightest idea what to give you. Your birthday's day after to-morrow and I'm in despair! Isn't there anything you want?"

"Yes."

"What? A new fur coat?"

"You really want to please me?"

"Yes. Anything."

He looked at her and a slow smile wrinkled the skin around his eyes. "I've got to go to New York to-night for the Associated Press meeting. I'll be back to-morrow night at eleven. It'll be my birthday in an hour." He smiled as if she ought to understand.

"You're too cryptic. I don't understand."

"Then come close and I'll whisper." He put his mouth to her ear. "One really passionate night." He kissed her ear.



It was nearly midnight when he reached the Square. There was a light in Mildred's room. He tiptoed upstairs to his room, changed quickly to a dressing-gown and hurried expectantly down to her.

She was sitting up in bed. "John dear, I thought you were never coming!"

"Darling."

She kissed him and opened the covers for him. He turned out the light and slipped into bed. She kissed him again—a kiss that was not a beginning but an end—turned her back to him, and said, "Good night." Her breathing grew deep and regular.

"By Jove, I'll be thirty to-morrow!" he said.

"Oh!" She awakened with a shudder. "How you startled me! What did you say, darling?"

"I said, I'd forgotten. In five minutes it will be my birthday, won't it?"

"Yes," she said, "and I do hope you'll like the present I've got for you. It's so hard to find you nice things. You seem to have everything you want. Good night, dearest."

"Good night," he said.

He did not stir until her breathing was again deep and regular. Then he crept upstairs and into bed in his own room.



"You refuse?" George Milligan stood scowling beside John's desk in the *Times* office.

"Absolutely. No baby contests. No limerick competitions. No Sunday comic section. If we can't get circulation legitimately, we'll do without it."

"That's not business, Corsey."

"Maybe not; but that's the way the *Times* is going to be run."

"You make it damned hard for a man who's alive to be your circulation manager. You don't give me a chance."

"What do you care if I'm satisfied?"

"Maybe the owners won't be. They foot the bills. And I want to make good."

"Has either of them ever said a word to you?"

Milligan shifted his feet and his eyes. "Not especially. I did happen to meet Mr. Leather the other day at the League and he—"

"Thanks," John interrupted. "I'm not interested in anything Mr. Leather has to say, and in future will you please remember that I'm running this paper and if you have any communications to make to Mr. Leather, or he to you, they go through me."

"Hell! Don't get sore, Corsey, we just happened to—"

"Thanks and au revoir." John turned to the papers on his desk and Milligan stalked out. John looked across the low tin roofs on Purchase Street toward the high gray mass of the MacMahon Building, the ground floor of which contained Mr. Leather's office. Then he saw his brother Theodore hurrying up the street, head bent, hands clasped behind him. "Been visiting his friend!" John sneered at the gray building. His fingers drummed his desk. "They can go to hell," he said.

The door of his office opened suddenly and Theodore stood in the doorway, jaw tight, eyes staring.

"You can go to hell," said John.

"What?" Theodore felt toward a chair.

"If you want baby contests and the Katzenjammer Kids you'll have to get another editor," said John.

"What do you mean, John?"

"Well, then, why are you looking like an early Christian martyr?"

"I—I don't know what you're talking about, John." Theodore's right fist closed and beat his knee. "Oh, the damned swine! The damned swine!"

"Who?"

"Leather!"

"I quite agree," laughed John. "What's up?"

Theodore combed the thin hair on his temples with quick strokes of his finger nails.

"What's up, Ted?"

"John, please promise me you'll say nothing to any one, not even Mildred."

"Certainly. What's up?"

"He's—he's trying to— Oh, the damned swine!"

"Trying what?"

"Trying to grab my business."

"I should think he'd have quite a job," smiled John, "inasmuch as Pauline owns it."

"He's trying to make me sell."

"Well, if you don't want to sell it's not very difficult, is it, to tell him to go to hell?"

"Please don't joke, John. It's not a joking matter."

"What is it then?"

Theodore looked at the floor and rubbed the palm of his left hand with his right thumb. "I've been a damned fool," he said, "a damned fool! But I trusted him. Confound it, I trusted him!"

"What did you do?"

"Well, first I told him all about my business: boasted, I guess. He knows our situation as well as I know it

myself. And to-day he said to me quite casually, in his usual quiet, friendly little way: 'I think, Theodore, that you haven't begun to grasp the possibilities of your business. There's about ten millions a year in it instead of one. I've considered the matter lately and decided I'd like to go in on it with you.' "

"What did you say?"

"Told him of course that I didn't want a partner; that I was trying to build up Chatham and Corsey into the greatest coal firm in the world; that I wanted it for my children. Then he just sighed and rubbed his fat little hands together and said he quite understood and that he was sorry, that he'd hate to compete with me, he was so grateful for the start father had given him—"

"Et cetera!" grinned John.

"—but he'd decided to go into coal on a large scale. Then he named the mines he and his New York connections had got control of. It just happens that a lot of our contracts with our biggest mines run out this year. He said he'd got control of those mines and was going to include them in his selling organization. Finally he intimated—oh, very delicately—that he'd buy control of every mine we sell for. He had me scared by that time and I asked him what his proposition was. And the little weasel said he'd like to turn Chatham and Corsey into a corporation, five million dollars common stock, no preferred, no bonds, fifty-one per cent to himself and forty-nine to me! And five million dollars is exactly the amount we have on hand in cash and equipment and stocks of coal. It's theft! Straight theft!" Theodore pounded the arm of his chair and began to suck a skinned knuckle.

"Let me get it straight," said John. "What have your profits been?"

"Average about a million a year."

"And you have five millions on hand in various forms?"

"Yes."

"And he's demanding more than two millions and a

half for nothing, and half the goodwill of the business for nothing, and control of the business as well for nothing."

"Nothing but a threat."

"Well, at least I admire his nerve."

"He even had the gall to say he could prove to me that my forty-nine per cent of the new corporation would be worth more than the whole of Chatham and Corsey."

"What did he mean?"

"I didn't wait to find out. I was so mad that I got up and left him without saying anything and he had the nerve to call after me that he'd expect an answer by to-morrow."

"Of course you'll tell him to go to hell."

"I don't know."

"Why not?"

"You don't understand how powerful he is. He's got half the money in New York behind him. I don't think he's bluffing. He probably already has an agreement with the mines who sell through other agents or sell for themselves: he probably has bought control of the mines whose contracts with us expire this year. Yes, and he may even buy control of the other mines who sell through us and have them refuse to deliver to us: tie us up in lawsuits. We're only agents. We don't own a thing. And he's got power."

"So have you. Can't you hit him somehow?"

"How?"

"Well . . ." John looked at his desk, then at the ceiling, then back at his desk. On a pile of New York papers lay the *Herald*, open at the page of ship news. He looked at the list of impending departures and arrivals and grinned. "Well, for example—it may be a silly suggestion—but he and his New York friends are pretty deep in steamship lines, aren't they?"

"Yes."

"And you supply the steam coal to their lines and your English branch supplies them on the other side."

"Yes."

"Well, I see that the *Oceanic* and the *Celtic* and the *Lucania* are steaming this week from New York, and the *Cedric*, the *Campania*, and the *Umbria* from the other side. Why do you let them?"

"What do you mean?"

"Why don't you tell him that not a ship of any line in which he's interested gets a ton of coal until he withdraws his threat in writing; and that if he refuses and you have to tie up the liners you'll publish your reasons in the *Times*? I'll give you the front page and an editorial every day till the town is too hot to hold him."

Theodore's finger nails combed his temples; slowly his eyes turned down, and he sat staring at the floor, his head in his hands. The voices of newsboys came through the open windows calling: "Extry. Extry. Roosevelt says, Yah, Yum, Hum. Extry."

"I can't." Theodore looked up. "There's something more. I've been a damned fool. . . . You'll forget, John right now."

"Certainly."

"For a long time I've had a girl in New York."

"What of it?"

"When I was over there last Saturday a couple of men suddenly came in. . . . We—we were in bed."

"How could they?"

"It's an apartment. Riverside Drive. They had a key."

"What did they do?"

"Took a good look at us. Then one of them said: 'Oh, excuse me. Beg your pardon. We're in the wrong apartment.'"

"What's that got to do with Leather?"

"They looked like detectives and I'm sure now that he sent them."

"He didn't have the nerve to say, to intimate he'd—"

"He didn't say a word. I just know."

John lighted a cigarette and blew a funnel of smoke

at the ceiling. "You really think he'd be dirty enough to let Pauline know?"

"I don't know. I don't dare risk it."

"But you have to. And why not? She must suspect you have a mistress. She must actually know."

"Not Pauline. She believes in intercourse for the purpose of procreation only. She wouldn't notice if I didn't go near her more than once a year."

"You poor old thing!" said John. Then he grew very red and his voice exploded: "If she's like that, why in hell do you care? If she's like that, you'd be better off divorced!"

"With five children?" said Theodore.

John stared a long time into his brother's pale blue eyes. "I understand," he said, "but I'd risk it anyhow. I don't believe Leather would dare try to break your marriage. If he does, can't you trust Pauline?"

Theodore shook his head.

"But you don't even know that the men were detectives. And you can't let him blackmail you. There'd be no end to it. You've got to tell him you'll tie up the liners."

"Aside from the risk with Pauline, I'd be liable for God knows what damages to the steamship companies if I had to make good the bluff."

"He wouldn't risk it."

"Why not? He could simply deny he'd ever had such a conversation with me."

"Nobody would believe Leather's word against yours."

"Nobody of our own particular group of friends. But the courts would. He's a bigger man in the business world than I am."

"Then get his proposition in writing."

"How? He's not such a fool as to put it on paper."

"Then ask him to go to your house or your office and have a court stenographer in the next room."

"He wouldn't come. I've always gone to his office."

"Try it, anyhow."

Theodore looked at the floor. "No. I don't dare to fight him, John. I can't risk losing the children."

"Don't be a quitter, Ted." John pressed the bell on his desk. Miss Sidel's teeth appeared in the doorway. "Miss Sidel, will you please phone Mr. Leather's secretary. Say that you are Mr. Theodore Corsey's secretary. Say that Mr. Corsey will be glad to receive Mr. Leather at his house this evening or at his office to-morrow morning."

Theodore half rose in protest, but Miss Sidel disappeared and they waited in silence. A clock struck five.

"God, you've been an ass, Ted!" said John.

"I know, but I thought I didn't have an enemy in the world."

"You didn't have. Only a friend: Mr. Leather."

There was a knock on the door. "Come in," called John.

"Mr. Leather regrets he is engaged both this evening and to-morrow morning," said Miss Sidel. "He will expect Mr. Corsey at his office to-morrow afternoon at three. Is there anything else, sir?"

"Nothing. Thank you," said John. She closed the door. "Well, that's that!" He sent a long breath whistling through his teeth.

"And to think that I've had the little weasel to dine and introduced that bawd he married to Pauline and to all our friends! That's my only chance, John!" Theodore lurched to his feet and paced up and down the office.

"What?"

"Is there any one in the office you can really trust—trust as you would yourself?"

"Yes: young MacCallum."

"Who's he?"

"A youngster from Trenton. Well born and just down from Princeton. A gentleman. He's been doing the sob stories lately. Do you remember Miss Booth and the canary in the penitentiary? That was his."

"Could you send him to Russia?"

"What for?"

Theodore stopped pacing. "I've an idea that Mrs. Leather was never divorced from Demicuzene and if he's still alive it's bigamy."

"That would be a pretty low form of skullduggery, Ted; as bad as Leather. You can't do that."

"But it's my only chance, John. Leather's crazy about her. It would damned near kill him. I'd have him nailed."

"Oh, come on, Ted, you know you wouldn't do it."

"Why not?"

"One just doesn't do that sort of thing."

"I would. I will. He's trying to blackmail me. You've got to fight fire with fire."

"No, you don't. Never. It's better to be licked by Leather than to become a Leather yourself."

"You mean to say that if he were blackmailing you, you wouldn't make him stop by threatening to expose his wife?"

"If I did, I'd never respect myself again."

"But it's self-defense, John. I didn't start it. It's an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

"Hell, Ted, you can't be as indecent as the Old Testament."

"I'm not joking."

"Neither am I. It's better to let Leather break you than to bend you into his own shape. The worst thing he can do to you is to make you like himself. He's a crook; you can't let him make you a crook. After all, Ted, you are a gentleman and he isn't."

"I can't help it. It's just another case of bad money driving out good. You can't compete with a crook unless you use his methods. If you don't, he survives and you die. His children live in palaces and yours in the gutter. Damn it, John, Leather will have me under his thumb for life unless I can get something on him. Send for MacCallum."

"No."

"Look here, John. You're my brother, the only person

I can turn to for help, talk to frankly. If you won't help me, if you won't send MacCallum I'll just have to send somebody else. And I have no one I can trust."

"All right."

"And it *will* be all right with you because your hands will remain lily-white. You'll be able to feel beautifully superior to your brother."

"You know it's not that, Ted. You know if you're going to do it I'd just as soon be in on it with you. It's just that . . . well, it seems to me that doing a thing like that, or even deciding to try to do it, will take out of us something we've always had, something that father had and so far as I know all the blessed Corseys back to Sir John the first, something mighty real, the thing probably that's kept us on top of the world for a good many centuries: our own standard. I'd rather have you shoot Leather than try to blackmail him, even though he's trying to blackmail you. Why the devil was dueling ever abolished!" He flung his cigarette on the carpet, jumped up and stamped on it, and began to pace the floor.

"Then you won't help me," said Theodore.

"What do you want me to do? It's your decision. You know how I feel. And you know too that I'll stand by you no matter what you want." He stared into his brother's eyes.

A pause.

"I want you to send MacCallum. I'll keep away from Leather till we get the report. If Mrs. Leather is straight, I'll hand over my business and get out of this God-damned country."

"What do you mean?"

"I'll go to England and try to have a decent life with decent people. There's no place in this country any longer for a gentleman. We've decided in any case to send the children to Eton. We might as well follow them."

"You don't really mean it."

"Yes. I'm sick of seeing people who ought to be butlers and stud grooms and butchers blooming with coun-

try places and pearls for their wives and strutting around the Senate. Lodge and Roosevelt are the only gentlemen left in politics. Business is run by Jews and parvenus. Leather ought to be a jockey."

"Well, if you feel that way, it hardly seems appropriate either to adopt Mr. Leather's standard of personal conduct or to desert the few gentlemen that remain over here. What could you do in England? You'd always be a stranger, even if you did buy a title by the usual process. And you're really needed here."

"Then make it possible for me to stay here."

"I've told you I'll do what you ask; but I don't want you to ask."

A pause. They looked at each other.

"But I do," said Theodore.

John turned abruptly and pressed the bell on his desk.

"Miss Sidel, I'd like to see Mr. MacCallum."

"Thanks, John," said Theodore.

John did not look at him but stood gazing out the window. A purple Packard touring-car, two men on the box, honked down Purchase Street and halted in front of Mr. Leather's office. There was a knock on the door and a blond youth appeared.

"Mr MacCallum—my brother Theodore Corsey." They shook hands. "Mr. MacCallum, I want you to undertake a highly confidential mission. I've sent for you because I have complete confidence in your discretion and your ability to hold your tongue. You will kindly not discuss this matter with any one."

"Certainly not, sir," said MacCallum.

"The *Oceanic* steams to-morrow. Will you please go aboard her and proceed as quickly as possible to Moscow? It is alleged that Lydia Demicuzene, now Mrs. Leather, was never divorced from Demicuzene."

"Michael Demicuzene," said Theodore.

"Will you please find out first if there is any record of a marriage between Lydia and Michael Demicuzene,

second if there is any record of a divorce, third whether or not Demicuzene is alive? If he is alive and will give you a written statement, properly witnessed, to the effect that he was married to Lydia Demicuzene and never divorced, you may pay him whatever he asks for it. I will give you a check now for your expenses."

"Let me," said Theodore.

"Very well. You had better buy a letter of credit. Is everything clear?"

"Perfectly," said MacCallum, who kept a copy of *A Message to Garcia* in his desk in the *Times* local room. Theodore wrote a check and handed it to the youth. "That is a great deal of money, Mr. Corsey."

"You may need it," said Theodore. "And please do not hesitate to spend it."

"And if you find that Mrs. Leather was married to Demicuzene and not divorced and that Demicuzene is still alive, please cable me one word: 'Yes,'" said John.

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you," said John. "Good-bye, and good luck."

"Good-bye, and thank you, sir." MacCallum solemnly shook hands and left the room.

"He looks competent," said Theodore.

"I hate like hell to send him on such an errand," said John.

"I'm obliged to you," said Theodore.

"And you'd better remember in future that it's only the strict monogamist who doesn't pay blackmail," said John.

"Thanks," said Theodore. "Good night."

He shook John's hand and went out. John stood looking out the window.

The purple Packard raced up the street trailing two dust streamers which the May sun turned to gold spray. Mr. Leather sat in the tonneau, plump hands folded, smiling serenely.

"Ugh!" John left the window and walked down the

alley which contained the cubicles of the editorial writers. He turned into the toilet and washed his hands.



The stillness of a June evening lay on Kingsale like a weight of oil. From the chestnuts a shadow was creeping over the rose garden. There was no other movement between the woods. As far as the blue hill which closed the vista the meadows were a drowsing hum of green. John followed Mildred into the garden. The low sun touched her hair and penetrated the blue-white pineapple fiber of her dress. She passed into the shadow of the chestnuts, picked a yellow tea rose, and fixed it in his coat. The crickets stopped their day-long fiddling, making a silence vivid as sudden deafness. The meadows were imprisoned in the level evening light as if embalmed in amber. He looked at Mildred. There was a stillness on her face, a pure tranquillity. She moved slowly from the garden to the woods. Her feet were silent on the moss-grown path. From time to time a ray of sunlight, piercing the heavy leaves of the chestnuts and maples, fell on her hair. There was a warm odor rising from the earth, a breeding odor, steady and strong. She paused in the aperture which led to the further meadows. Her left hand fluttered up. John followed her eyes.

Rush, astride his dun pony, was looking at the stream which cut the meadow. They watched. He straightened his shoulders, tightened his knees, and rode at the stream. The pony balked. He rode back, so close that they could see the tense set of his seven-year-old jaw. He rode at the stream. The pony swerved. Rush swung his crop. Crack! Crack! The pony jumped.

They watched him canter across the meadow till he disappeared over a privet hedge. They looked at each other. They walked on hand in hand.

There was a log under a willow by the stream. Mildred sat down. He sat beside her and kissed her ever so lightly.

"Darling, why can't we be this close always!" he said.

"Oh, don't let's talk, John! Let's just be happy. Don't pull it to pieces by talking!"

"But we can be this close always. Closer! If you'd only help me find the way to you, to the place you really live."

She did not answer.

"Why can't you, Mildred? We've lived together eight years now and I'm as far from knowing your realest self, your real wants, as when we were children at dancing school. Why can't you open your doors and let me in?"

"There aren't any doors, dear. I'm not a complex person like you. You know all there is of me."

"That isn't true, Mildred. It can't be. If it were, you wouldn't love Rush the way you do, you wouldn't play the piano with all the passion that you do. There is an inside fire in you. But you won't let me find the way to it."

"If there were one and you found it, you'd probably not like it, you'd probably not love me any more."

"I would, Mildred! I'd be a part of you and you of me. What is it? What do you really want out of life?"

Silence.

"What I have," she said.

"That can't be all."

"Why not? I'm happy. I'm content."

"But one wants so much more in life than content."

"What?"

"Enchantment. Ecstasy."

"But you aren't even happy with that, John. When you find it, you pull it to pieces, like this afternoon. You're like Rush used to be, pulling roses to pieces to see what they were like inside. Why can't you accept life instead of trying to analyze it? Accept people. Accept me. I accept you."

"I know you do, darling, and God knows I'm grateful

to you; but I want something more and you must too. I want a closeness—a fierce closeness. We're coming to the end of our youth. I'm thirty-two. You're thirty. How often have we found ecstasy together? How often do we find it? One owes it to life to find enchantment always, every day."

"Insatiable!" she smiled. "There's a ladybug on your cravat." She picked off the spot of brown and red and blew it into the air.

"No, darling, it's true. What are our lives?"

"About as perfect as possible. We have everything to make us happy: Rush, money, position, friends. And we love each other."

"But we're living the only life we'll ever live, and to what does it amount? I'm a newspaper editor, earning money which we don't need. The *Times* would go on just as well if I were dead. Still I go every day to the damned office and pretend I'm doing something large and useful."

"And you are. You're running an honest newspaper. Who in America is doing anything better?"

"But it's for no purpose, for no end that's worth while in itself. I'm not making beauty or serving a cause. I'd rather be a Russian anarchist or a poet in a garret. They have something outside themselves to serve: a thing that at least seems worth while."

"Thanks. But while you were in exile in Siberia it would be rather hard on Rush and me, wouldn't it?" she smiled.

"If you'd let me get really close to you and would get close to me, you wouldn't mind even that."

"Dear John, I'm not like you and never will be. You'll have to get used to taking me as I am. But you can be a poet if you want. We won't have to starve in a garret. How's your novel going?"

"It's not. I can't write it. I can't write."

"If you'd tell me the plot maybe I could help you."

"No. You couldn't. I know."

"Who's running away from closeness now?" she smiled.

He smiled back. "There's just no use, Mildred. I know now that I'll never be able to write. I'll just go on the rest of my life editing the *Times*."

"Or in politics," she said. "Now that Wayne plays tennis with Roosevelt every afternoon, he ought to be able to get you any job that would amuse you."

"I don't want a job. If there were anything to serve, anything in politics worth doing, I might; but—"

"But, dear John, you do serve Chesterbridge and the country. Your editorials—"

"Who reads them?"

"Every one."

"Then they must have mighty little to do. There's nothing nowadays worth writing about. What difference does it make whether it's Harriman that's lying or Roosevelt? It's not as if one lived in the time of the *Federalist*. And one can't write about the only things about which one feels strongly."

"What sort of things?"

"These damned automobiles driving out horses: Roediger's store ruining and absorbing all the nice little shops on Purchase Street: Leather! Everybody in Chesterbridge getting richer every day and the city becoming noisier and uglier and sootier and smellier."

"Lovely word," said Mildred.

"It suits what's happening to life in America."

"Why don't you write that? There's your cause."

"Every one would bellow with laughter, call me an eighteenth century reactionary. Well, maybe I am, but by God the country is running away as fast as it can from every standard it ever had, from every ideal of Washington or Hamilton or even Jefferson. Yes, and of old Walt Whitman, too. And there's as much use trying to stop it as trying to stop the Twentieth Century Limited by lying on the track in a fog."

"Mr. Johnny!" Pullen's voice called from the woods.

"Hello!" John answered.

Pullen appeared at the aperture in the wild-grape vine. "Miss Sidel on the telephone."

"Another charming change," said John. "We can't even sit here and talk in peace. God bless modern progress."

He walked quickly to the house. Mildred followed slowly.

He took up the telephone. "Hello."

"A cablegram, Mr. Corsey, I thought you'd like to know."

"Open it and read it," said John.

"It's from . . . Moscow. Just one word: 'Yes,' signed MacCallum."

"Thank you. Good night," said John.

He stood looking at the floor.

Mildred entered. "Bad news, John?"

"Yes—eh—no—that is—" He turned to Pullen. "Pat, mother is still expecting Mr. Theodore for supper to-night, isn't she?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'm going out now to walk in the garden. When he arrives, will you send him out?"

"What's wrong, John?" asked Mildred.

"Nothing, dear. Just a bit of business of Ted's and mine that I want to talk over with him. You'd better rest before supper. I believe Ted's bringing a precious nouveau-riche New York banker and his wife: Bellevue, I think, translated from Schoenblick. Wear your blue velvet, will you?" He went out.

He paced the fragrant dusk of the garden till the acetylene headlights of Theodore's Pierce Arrow blazed between the trunks of the chestnuts. He stood waiting. Theodore crossed the moonlit lawn. "I wanted to see you, too, John," he began abruptly, "about that youngster you sent to Russia. I—I want you to call him off."

"Oh, Ted! I'm so glad!" John's arm went around his brother's shoulder. "I knew in the end you'd not want

to do that. I knew you'd see what it meant. It's so much better to fight Leather on our own ground in our own way."

"There's no fight," said Theodore in a carefully casual voice.

"He's withdrawn his . . ."

"No—er—John, I'm afraid I went off rather half cocked the other day. I wish you'd forget what I said."

"What's happened?"

"Well, I avoided Leather till to-day. This afternoon I met him on the street and couldn't escape and he explained his proposition and it's a good one!" Theodore laughed abruptly.

"How can forty-nine per cent of a business be as good as a hundred per cent?"

"It depends on the way the business is run."

"You mean you've been less than forty-nine per cent efficient?"

"Not exactly that."

"What then?"

"Well, there are possibilities in it that I've been missing. As I've bothered you so much about this, John, I suppose you're entitled to know the details; but I ask you please to promise me to forget what I say."

"Certainly."

"And I'd like to say first that I'll be glad to be out of any responsibility for the business when it's running on Leather's plan; but there'll be millions in it and he'll be inside the law and . . . Well, business is business."

"What's he going to do?"

"Well, he can control about eighty per cent of the high-grade bituminous mines, or at least control their officers sufficiently to get them to sign fifty-year irrevocable contracts with Chatham and Corsey. That will give us control of the bituminous market of the world."

"But you've practically got that now and you'll only have forty-nine per cent of the profits instead of a hundred."

"Wait till you hear what he plans to do. First there'll be the regular commission for selling. That gives us a million a year now and will give us a lot more. Next he's going to add a banking feature: we'll make advances to the companies while their output is being sold and there will be the interest on that. But here's his real idea. We'll control the market for the highest-grade bituminous. We'll be able to buy or sell any number of tons in futures or actual deliveries. Suppose we knock the price a dollar, sell to ourselves, or a dummy company, the year's output of all our mines, then lift the price two dollars. On a million tons sold that way there's a sure profit without any risk of two million dollars. Suppose we sell short the next year's output a dollar up, then drop the price two dollars before we sell to ourselves. There's another two millions profit on a million tons. Then, if before we broke the price, we should sell coal stocks short and if before advancing the price we should cover and load up with them—well, the profits would be as big as one dared to make them. I'll have a hell of an income and no responsibilities. We're going to England."

"You've agreed to that proposition?" John peered at his brother.

"Yes."

"You've definitely promised?"

"Yes."

John walked quickly toward the house.

"Where are you going, John?" Theodore hurried after him. "Why are you running away like that?"

"I'm engaged in carrying out your request to forget what you had to say."

"Oh, come on, John, what's the matter?" Theodore caught his arm.

"Nothing whatever." John flung open the front door. Mrs. Corsey was showing the Bellevues the portraits on the staircase. "And that," she was saying, "is the South Carolina signer."



"He's lost!" John thumped his pillow.

Mildred awoke with a little gasp. "Oh, John, how you frightened me! What's happened?"

"Nothing, dear. Sorry. Go to sleep."

"How can I sleep when you're so restless? Do go into the next room, dear. I'm so tired. It's silly anyhow for us to sleep in the same bed. Only peasants sleep in the same bed."

"Or lovers."

"No one goes on year after year. And you're so restless now that you wake me ten times a night. Please go."

"No, Mildred, please! I'm sorry. I'll stay still."

"Why won't you go? What difference can it make? Most people never sleep together. Suppose I snored."

"Then you wouldn't be you and I'd never have loved you."

"Nonsense! You didn't know when you asked me to marry you. Just go to-night. I'm so tired."

"I don't want to go, Mildred."

"Why not?" Her voice was querulous.

"I'm afraid."

"Of what?"

"I'm afraid I'll never come back."

"But why?"

"I don't know. It's—it's sort of a symbol, I suppose. We've tried for a kind of closeness. At least I've tried and . . . well, maybe we haven't found it, but I don't want to admit that. I don't want to stop trying. I'm afraid of what will happen. If we'd never tried sleeping together, we'd— But we did try, we have for years, and I don't want to start moving away from you instead of towards you, Mildred." He turned to kiss her. His lips entered a yawn. He got up abruptly and walked to a window.

"Sorry, John dear, I am so sleepy. Give me a nice kiss and go to bed next door."

He walked slowly to the bed and took her limp hand. "Mildred, I'll go; but I want to say this to you, and I mean it: if I go, it's up to you from now on. I've tried

all I can to make our marriage something close and lovely. It's up to you now."

"All ri—" She yawned again.

He walked to the adjoining room and stood looking over the dark lawns between the darker woods. The lights of the distant city glowed in the sky above the farthest hill. "We're losing everything," he turned, head bowed, to the bed and lay face downward on the spread. Then he slept well.



A warm breeze stirred the pages of a manuscript strewn on the table in John's room on the Square. One sheet and then another drifted to the floor. He did not look up. He was turning over and over in his hands a bracelet of silver and jade.

A bell shrilled. Pullen's feet slowly mounted the uncarpeted stairs. John placed the bracelet in the table drawer and turned the key.

"A young man, Mr. Johnny, says he's Mr. MacCallum from the office, wants—"

"Send him right up."

Pullen's slow creak descended, then the stairs rang under crisp treads. John rose.

"Delighted to see you again, Mr. MacCallum."

"Thank you, sir." MacCallum drew a long envelope from his inside pocket and presented it with military precision.

"The papers!" John grinned.

"Yes, sir." MacCallum, unsmiling, bowed. "A copy of the marriage register of Michael and Lydia Demicuzene. And his deposition, witnessed, to the effect that he was never divorced from his wife."

"How did you get it?"

"A thousand dollars. He's practically in the gutter."

John unlocked the drawer of the table, placed the envelope carefully in the back of the drawer and locked

it again. "I must apologize, Mr. MacCallum, for sending you on such an errand."

"Not at all, sir."

"And I must ask you further to forget completely all that you have learned. No one will ever make the slightest use of these documents. The reason for my desire to obtain them exists no longer. You will please endeavor to erase this episode completely from your memory."

"Very good, sir."

"Incidentally, you've been getting twenty-five a week, haven't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You'll have fifty from to-day, and a thousand bonus."

"Oh, thank you very much, sir."

"And the death of poor old Walker gives us a vacancy on the editorial staff. Would you care to fill it?"

"Thank you, sir. I think not, sir."

John's eyebrows lifted.

"You see I want to write, sir, really write: novels. And one does see things, have experiences as a reporter, but as an editor one just sits in the same little office day after day and pretends one knows all about things about which one really knows nothing, and one becomes more and more ignorant and narrow and bigoted every day until—"

"You don't leave me much of a leg to stand on," John grinned.

"Oh, not you, sir! I mean people like some of your editorial writers, like Mr. Roach, for instance. He's never been abroad; but he keeps a full set of Baedekers locked in the bottom of his desk, and the moment anything happens anywhere he rushes in and locks his door and reads up about Peking or Constantinople or Kiev and springs his information as if he really knew something. I don't want to have that sort of secondhand existence. I want to see things for myself and write about them."

"Have you published anything yet?"

"Nothing I'd care to have you see, sir," MacCallum blushed. "Two in the *Saturday Evening Post*."

"I don't remember seeing your name."

"They were so rotten I couldn't bear to sign them with my own name, sir. I used—"

"Never mind. Don't tell me. I understand."

"You do it yourself, sir?" MacCallum looked down at the scattered manuscript.

"No. Not even that any longer. I haven't published a line for about six years."

"But you're working. On a novel?"

"A novel. But I'm not working. I can't make it go."

"Excuse me, sir, but why do you try to make it go? Let it go. Let the characters do it themselves."

"That's easier said than done."

"What's the plot?"

"Man and a woman love each other, not married, and she leaves him because she thinks he doesn't love her enough, not completely; and she has a child, illegitimate, and she conceals it from him and goes on working for it and sinks lower and lower and in the end comes back to the man and they marry and are happy."

"Where are you stuck?"

"Where she comes back."

"Then probably she wouldn't. You're probably forcing the characters."

"Maybe." John extended his hand.



It was evening, and the next morning Rush was to leave for St. Jude's. The crescendos of the Liebestod were crashing through the yellow music room. Mildred, eyes fixed, thin lips tense, was lashing the piano with a passionate abandon that held her audience, John and Rush, leaning forward in their chairs, rising to the agonized music. She finished and sat a moment, crumpled, as if she were unaware of her surroundings. Then she began to chafe her long fingers and stood up.

"Oh, play it again, mother! Play it again!" Rush's eyes were brimming pools.

"You're amazing, Mildred!" John kissed her hand.

"Please play it again, mother!"

"No, dear, no more to-night. It's time you were in bed and I must see that your trunk is properly packed."

"Oh, mother, please!"

"When you come back for the Christmas holidays." She bent and kissed her son.

They walked upstairs together, her arm across his shoulders. John followed them and sat on Rush's bed while Mildred examined the contents of the trunk. She patted a Bible into place in the tray and closed the lid. "There!" She straightened. "Now, darling, your toys."

"I've piled the ones I'll give away in that corner," said Rush.

"But, darling, there are only old broken things."

"That's all I want to give away," said Rush.

"That's not very generous, is it, dear? Think of all the poor little children who'll have nothing at all for Christmas. Think how happy it would make them to have your boat or your train."

"I don't have to give away my train, do I, father?"

"You don't have to give away anything," said Mildred, "but I hoped you'd want to give away some really nice presents. I hoped you'd be generous."

Rush's lower lip began to quiver.

"He has been generous." John rose from the bed and strolled toward the pile of toys.

"There's my baseball," said Rush, "and that catcher's mitt you bought me, mother. It never was much good but still they might like it. And there are all my soldiers. And the music box still runs."

"Hello!" John smiled. "Have you had that all these years." He picked up the music box. "Une Petite Chanson Joyeuse," he read. "Do you remember, Mildred? He learned to turn it when he was only a year old, just before he talked." John turned the handle. A disjointed

tinkle came from the box. He grinned. "I don't think your poor children will get this either, Mildred; I'm going to keep it myself."

"Don't be silly, John!" She snatched the box and tossed it on the pile of toys.

He lurched at the pile. Then the little finger of his left hand snapped down against the palm and he picked up the box, slowly, and walked quietly to his room.

Mildred's voice pursued him: "Don't you understand, Rush, there's no virtue in giving a present unless you really care about the thing you give away? It's the sacrifice that counts. I know you've loved your train; but you're a big boy now and probably you'll never play with it again, and now that you're going away I'd like to feel that you'd learned to discipline yourself. I'd like to feel you were my good, generous, self-sacrificing Rush."

"All right, mother. The spring's getting pretty weak anyhow."

"Thank you, darling."

A kiss.

"Now come downstairs, dear. Mother would like to talk to you all alone just for a little while."

"I'll be down in a minute. I gotta go to the bathroom."

"I'll be waiting for you, dear."

Mildred's dress swished downstairs. Rush appeared in the doorway of John's room.

"Hello, son."

"Father," Rush looked at the floor, "don't you think for a minute that I care about that train. I don't care at all. I'd just as soon give it away. It won't be long anyhow before I'm president of the real road."

"Good for you, Rush."

There was a pucker between the boy's black brows, an embarrassed pucker. He walked bashfully into the room, took the music box from John's table and turned the crank. A splutter of notes gushed. He put down the box and smiled at his father.

"Mother just doesn't understand anything, does she?" he said.

"What!" A flush spread to the roots of John's hair. "What do you mean by saying such a thing! How dare you say such a thing, Rush! Your mother is a wonderful, wonderful person and she loves every bone in your body and you—"

"I'm sorry, father. I—I only meant—I—"

"Go down to your mother's room, sir, and if ever again you let me hear you speak a disrespectful word about—"

Rush shrank away. John locked his door and stood staring at himself in the wardrobe mirror. "And I've done that!" His jaw hung open. "I've made him think that!"



"I won't see any more patients this afternoon, Miss Massey, and you can call it a day." Tom Athyn dismissed his secretary and turned to John, who was warming his back by the gas logs in the doctor's office fireplace. "Cigarette?"

"Thanks." John struck a match. His fingers shook as he held the flame to Tom's cigarette. Tom's eyes signaled the trembling fingers.

"That's just because I'm cold," John frowned. "I've been driving my new roadster between sixty-eight and seventy. It's a good car."

"What are you trying to do, kill yourself?"

"No; but somehow it's pleasant, that speed. I get a bit scared when I go over sixty and—I don't know why—but it's an agreeable fear."

"Um," Tom nodded. "You need the tension. Hasn't it ever occurred to you that there are other ways of dying the little death that are lots pleasanter and considerably less dangerous?"

"What do you mean?"

"Just that the explanation of your present condition is perfectly obvious. I have the X-rays and the urine

analyses here. The X-rays show nothing. And there's nothing wrong with your kidneys. Not a trace of either sugar or albumen. Your heart and lungs are O.K.; so are your teeth. You're apparently living a normal life. You don't smoke or drink enough to hurt you, and anyhow wine as good as you habitually drink never hurt any one. You get a bit of exercise. You ought to feel fit. But you don't sleep and you have pains in your heart and at thirty-six you have the arteries of a man of fifty-five and a corresponding blood pressure. And you like to drive a car at seventy miles an hour. You're just a damned bad advertisement for Mildred."

"Oh, come on, Tom!"

"No, John, you've got to let me tell you the truth. I'm your doctor, and something more, I hope, and I'm going to take care of you whether you like it or not. The pains are nothing serious: gas in your stomach pressing on your heart because you don't digest. And you don't digest properly because you're always under a hell of a strain. You're unhappy. You've got to tell me what sort of a life you're living with Mildred."

"About the same as we've always lived." John looked at his toes. Then he looked up suddenly. "No, Tom, that's a lie. I hardly ever go near her any more."

"Why not?"

"I don't know. I tried and tried to make her care, care really, care passionately . . . and then one day I just quit trying. I told her it was up to her to try. She didn't even notice I'd said anything. She wouldn't even remember the conversation. But that was the end for me. And now I can't try any more. Oh, I don't mean that I never go near her but—well, I only do when I come home a bit tight and when I'm almost crazy for some one. She's sweet and lovely to me always and—"

"Yes, damn her!"

"Come on, Tom!"

"Sorry, John, but I hate frigid, virtuous females like hell. A lot more men are killed by their wives' virtues

than by their wives' adulteries. And for every woman who murders her husband by putting bichloride in his soup or arsenic in his coffee there are a thousand who kill them by being good, sweet, clean refrigerators."

"Mildred's herself. She has a right to be herself. I made her marry me. If it was a mistake, it was my mistake. It wasn't her fault. She's just gone on being herself. She can't help it."

"No, but you can."

"How?"

"Why don't you leave her?"

"Because I love her."

"Bosh!"

"No. I really do love her. Really. I have a tremendous tenderness for her, and an admiration. And I'm grateful to her for Rush. And I'll never believe she's cold. It's different. Worse! I'm sure she has a fire inside: God, man, you've heard her play the piano! But I can't get to that fire. I've never been able to light it. It's there, though, I know. Maybe some one else could find the way to it, maybe—"

"Why hasn't some one then?"

"Because she's too honest, too clean straight through, too honorable even to let any one touch her hand so long as she's my wife."

"Then why don't you divorce her?"

"Damn it, man, I've told you I love her; and I respect her, yes, even reverence her a little, she's got such poise. And then there's Rush. We'll never divorce. We both love him too much. It would kill us, either of us, to give him up."

"Then, John, for Pete's sake, take a mistress. If you keep a girl in New York or on North High Street, you won't be dropping below any of your holy family standards. The Corseys never have been celebrated for their monogamy."

"It's such a dirty, secondhand way to live. And, Lord, what messes it gets you into! Theodore— No, that's not

—but—well . . . Confound it, I've had an experience in my own life that taught me . . . What's the use of talking! I won't do it."

"What will you do then?"

"Go on as I'm going."

"You can't, John; you'll kill yourself. Self-control is all right for people who have nothing to control, but for a person like you . . . look at your blood pressure and your shaking fingers and the pain in your heart and your seventy miles an hour: you'll drive through a fence one of these days."

"Maybe I will. The world won't lose much."

"How about Rush?"

"He doesn't need me any longer. Since he went away to St. Jude's I— By the way, his mother got a letter this morning; both he and your Jack are playing on the house hockey team. Nice, isn't it? Do you remember when you and I—"

"I remember everything and I also observe that you're trying to change the subject, which is your health."

"Oh, don't talk about me any more, Tom. I'm satisfied. I just wanted to know I hadn't developed cancer of the stomach or something of the sort."

"Well, I'm not satisfied."

"Then, sir, I must request you politely to go to hell. After all, Tom, you wouldn't listen to me long if I stood here urging you to be unfaithful to your wife."

"My wife, thank God, is a vicious woman, always has been, and, pray God, always will be. Inventively vicious! She's a whole harem in herself. If she weren't, I wouldn't mind your advice."

"Well, I'm bored with yours. By the way, give me a prescription for veronal, will you?"

"No."

"Then au revoir and go to hell. I'll get it without a prescription."

"So long, you poor fool."



"I can tell you now, Mildred, every word that every person who's coming to-night will speak: 'Steel's up another point.' 'Do you consider Utah Copper a good buy?' 'The team won both ends of the double-header.' 'Roosevelt ought to be shot for running against Taft.' 'Sarah Collingwood's baby weighed nine pounds. Just eight months since their marriage, my dear!' Et cetera, et cetera! It's too impossibly boring! Please try to find some new people for your next dinner. There must be some one amusing at the University or the Art School. Ask that cellist from the orchestra—any one." John stood beside his wife's dressing table playing with her bracelets. She drew a line of red along her thin lips and smoothed them with the tip of her little finger.

"Very well, I will. I'll ask that man you introduced to me the other night at the theater. I liked him."

"Who?"

"Milligan, isn't it?"

John laughed. "Oh, you can't ask him!"

"Why not? He's quite presentable. And as business manager of the *Times* he has a certain position."

"But his elder sister is, or was, a streetwalker and I've just taken his younger sister into my office to help Miss Sidel. One can't very well establish social relations with—"

A knock interrupted him. Pullen appeared. "Miss Eleanor on the phone, sir."

"I'll be right down."

"You see, John, you don't really want me to invite any one outside the crowd we've known since infancy," Mildred smiled.

"I do. I'm bored, horribly bored by them; but that doesn't mean I want to take on the Milligans." He walked down to the phone.

"Hello, Eleanor."

"John. It's too awful! Bobby's married again!"

"To whom!"

"Altieri, Maria Altieri!"

"Good Lord! When?"

"To-day in New York. I'm phoning from Kingsale. They're coming for the night. Mother wants you and Mildred to come out for dinner. You must! She needs you, she's—"

"Can't possibly. We've sixteen coming in ten minutes."

"Chuck them. You must come, even if Mildred can't. Mother—"

"How's she taken it?"

"Like herself. Backbone stiffer than ever. She almost fainted, then said quite quietly, 'I'm sure if Bobby loves her she must be a very remarkable woman.' Little fool! Why on earth did he have to marry her! He could have kept her easily enough. Almost every rich man in Europe has!"

"You don't know, Eleanor. That's just gossip."

"Yes, father! But you will come, John?"

"Yes, of course."

"Thanks."

The telephone clicked. John ran upstairs. "Mildred, you'll have to phone Uncle Fulke or Tom Athyn to take my place at dinner. Bobby's married Maria Altieri and he's bringing her to Kingsale!"

"Not Altieri the opera singer!"

"Yes."

"Well, dear, you'll have a new sensation at dinner after all," she smiled. Then she rose and patted his cheek. "Poor John, I am sorry. It is disgusting."

"I'll drive myself out in the Locomobile. Good night, dear." He kissed her hand and ran downstairs.

It was two o'clock in the morning when again he entered Mildred's room. He switched on the lights and hurried to her bed. "Sorry, dear, to wake you but I've got to talk to you."

"Was she terrible?" Mildred emerged slowly from her sleep.

"No, but she's going to wreck Bobby."

"How?"

"It was ghastly. She was just coming downstairs to dinner when I arrived. And I must say she is shockingly beautiful: slight as a fourteen-year-old-boy, huge black eyes, and black hair drawn tight down to them. Bobby was saying, 'That's a Gilbert Stuart and that's a Rembrandt Peale and those are Trumbulls,' and she wasn't listening. She didn't seem able to listen to him all evening. She was appraising Kingsale. I kissed her hand and her eyes began to examine me and she said nothing, so I said: 'I'm so glad Bobby's found happiness at last. How do you like Kingsale?' 'Such a quaint little old house!' she said. And she said it in such a way that suddenly Kingsale seemed small and shabby, utterly unworthy of her. Kingsale! And she out of the Naples gutter! She even made me look at Kingsale with new eyes. After all, it was built in the worst post-colonial period and the black walnut is rather appalling; but it's always seemed the grandest of domains to us and for her to . . . Well, at dinner she began to examine mother, saying nothing, studying mother as if she were appraising her, too. Mother asked if she intended to give up singing and she said: 'No. I had thought I could, but after what Bobby told me to-day about his income I know I can't afford it.' And she emphasized the 'to-day'!

"'Oh, but, my dear, Bobby has enough to make you very comfortable,' said mother.

"'That depends on what one means by comfort,' said Altieri, and then I noticed that every time she spoke the end of her nose moved up and down. It was so delicate that speech made it prehensile, unpleasantly prehensile, as if it wanted to reach out for the forks and spoons.

"Mother had begun to hate her and, being mother, was growing more and more polite: polite to the point of homicide. I was almost scared. I didn't know what was going to happen. Then after dinner, when we were having liqueurs in the drawing-room, mother said, 'Will you excuse me a moment?' and went upstairs. Bobby and

Altieri and Eleanor and I sat there waiting. It was like the seconds after a lightning flash when one waits for the thunder to crash. Then mother came down with her old black velvet box. You know the box."

"She didn't!"

"Yes. She gave the little guttersnipe her diamond necklace and gave it to her because she hated her, gave it to her for the honor of Bobby and Kingsale.

"Altieri put it around her neck, and I must say those diamonds have never been worn by as beautiful a woman. She was like a . . . well, like herself, exquisite . . . like a figure in a fountain, spattered with drops of shining water.

"After that she seemed a bit appeased. She showed us the emerald Bobby had given her and kissed mother good night. Mother returned her kiss, as difficult a thing as she ever had to do. Bobby and Altieri went up to bed. Then mother turned to me and looked at me and all at once, for the first time, she seemed an old woman. You know how straight she always stands—well, it's always seemed the natural expression of her spirit; but to-night it was as if she held herself erect only by the most frightful effort, an effort almost beyond her strength.

"She doesn't love him," said Eleanor.

"Don't say that again, ever again, to any one," said mother. "We'll treat her as one of ourselves until he finds out."

"She's just married him for money and now she finds he hasn't much. She won't stay with him a month," Eleanor went on, "particularly now that she's got your diamonds, mother. I'm glad you didn't make it the pearls."

"What else could I do?" Mother blushed, actually blushed!

"Nothing," I said. "You were perfectly right."

"You darling angel mammy!" Eleanor took mother in her arms and began to cry.

"Then I heard Bobby coming downstairs and I went out to keep him away from the drawing-room,

"Where's the Scotch, John? Maria wants a nightcap," Bobby called, beaming. I led him into the dining-room and he stood there, eyes shining, waiting for me to tell him that I thought his wife was the most wonderful woman in the world.

"Your wife is certainly extraordinarily beautiful," I said.

"But you can't see her real beauty, John," he said. "You won't see it until you know her as I know her. It's an inside beauty, a beauty of the spirit. I'll show it to you, though, some day. When we get back to New York, I'm going to ask her to pose for me as the Madonna."

"Wonderful," I said. "Here's the Scotch."

"Now, Mildred, for Lord's sake what are we going to do about it? When Bobby finds out what she really is, he'll shrivel into nothing. For all his six feet three he's still a baby, a baby!"

"Maybe he'll never find out," said Mildred. "It's too bad, though, that she got the diamonds. I'd always thought your mother intended to leave them to me."



"Well, Mr. Collingwood, if I remember rightly a bet you made ten years or more ago, on this night you owe Aunt Gertrude Carrollton a bunch of asparagus." John smiled down at John Collingwood's bald cranium.

"So I do. So I do. Too bad she's not well enough to be here to say, 'I told you so.' And look at them! It's as if they were giving the ball instead of appearing for the first time at the Concourse."

Mr. and Mrs. Leather, her left hand reaching down to the crooked elbow of her husband, were making slow and royal progress toward the ballroom door, bowing to right and left, bestowing smiles and casual handclasps. They passed the potted palm where John Collingwood and John Corsey stood and Mrs. Leather paused long enough to say, "Your wife is so beautiful to-night, Mr. Corsey."

"Thank you," he bowed gravely. "Praise from . . ." She passed on, pearls clicking against the stiff orchid brocade which covered her knees.

"Four yards of pearls if an inch!" snorted John Collingwood.

"And a wonderful exhibition of self-restraint at that," smiled John. "She has, at present, nine yards, I believe."

"And I suppose one should be thankful she's wearing only one of her three tiaras. She might have worn the other two as stomachers." John Collingwood blew his nose.

"I seem to perceive that you are not an admirer of Mrs. Leather, Uncle John."

"I am not."

"Then why didn't you keep them out of the Concourse?"

"I held them off single-handed for two years. But what's the use? Leather has some sort of a business connection with every other member of the committee. They harried me. After all the Concourse isn't my private ball and we've let in so many of the riffraff that two more scarcely matter. Ah, there's Mildred! And looking uncommonly handsome. I remember when her grandmother used to wear those coral ornaments."

"Yes, and I haven't danced with her yet," said John. "Excuse me."

He detached Mildred from the arms of Wayne Sinclair. She was warm and breathless.

"John," she panted as they swept away in a double Boston, "Mrs. Leather asked us to dine next Friday. You don't mind, do you? She's having Farrar and Caruso to sing."

"Not at all. Delighted," said John. "What's left of father will turn over in its grave and wonder at the results of a slice on the fourth hole; but never mind. Incidentally, Mildred, would you mind holding up your own arm and trying to dance a bit even if I am only your husband."

"You're simply disgusting to-night, John."

"Doubtless. But I like to dance when I'm dancing and nowadays when you dance with me you just go to sleep and let me carry you."

"If you think that, why do you dance with me?"

"*Toujours la politesse, my dear.*"

Abruptly she stopped dancing and walked away from him. He followed her. "I'm sorry, Mildred. Come on, finish it."

"I'm going home."

"Oh, come on, Mildred!" He caught her hand and tried to draw her into the sweep of the Valse Brune.

"I won't." She walked toward the ballroom door. "You can't insult me and expect me to forget the next instant."

"I've said I'm sorry."

"You always say that—so easily."

"Not to any one but you, ever."

"And it's your own fault, John. You dance abominably now. You used to dance really rather well, but now you just go on dancing without the slightest regard for the music. You're always half a beat ahead of it."

"And you, my dear, are half a beat behind. Rather characteristic of us, don't you think? I try to carry it and you let it carry you."

• "I don't. I just try to make you keep time but you won't."

"Then submit, my dear, and keep my time. Come on." His arm went around her waist and he began to dance. She followed, grimly. Their faces were set in violent concentration. They were both making an effort, a great effort, as if there depended on their dancing a large fate, a life, two lives or three. And they were dancing with so blind an intensity that the royally progressing Leathers became invisible until Mildred's elbow thumped on Mr. Leather's ear and her train swung under his plump foot. There was a rending tear.

"Oh, Mr. Leather, I'm so sorry! John's so clumsy! Good heavens! Has any one a pin?"

"Here, my dear, use this." Mrs. Leather plucked a diamond circle from her shoulder.

"Thanks so much. I'll send it to you in the morning. Now come, John, we'll go home, my dress is torn to ribbons."

In the motor they did not speak.

He followed her to the door of her room and bent to kiss her hand. She drew it away and closed her door. He walked up to his room.

"Well, that's that." He stood at a window a long time staring over the snow-covered Square. Then he undressed and got into bed, but after a time his voice exploded in the darkness, "No! You can't!" and he got out of bed and walked downstairs and turned the knob of Mildred's door. The door was locked. He knocked. There was no answer. He knocked again. There was no answer. "Mildred," he said. "Mildred!" he called. "Mildred, you don't know what you're doing. This is our last chance, our last chance to save anything!" A silence. "Mildred, I swear to you, if you don't open your door now, I'll never open it again. I'll never come again!"

Silence.

He turned slowly and walked upstairs. At the landing he stood listening. The tall clock was ticking as usual.

He walked to his room and locked his door. "That is that." The little finger of his left hand clicked down against the palm.



"And remember, Miss Sidel, if you don't find sun at Atlantic City, you're to go on to Pinehurst or Augusta. Never mind expense. The paper owes you a lot more than a month. It's your first real holiday in twenty years, isn't it?"

"Twenty-seven. You're too kind, Mr. Corsey!" Tears trickled down the furrows beside Miss Sidel's nose and dripped on her rabbit incisors. "You're sure Miss Miligan understands everything?"

"Run! You'll miss your train! Shoo!" John rose and Miss Sidel hurried out, staunching her laughter with a wet handkerchief.

John rang his desk bell. A pair of eyes, gray-blue, Irish, peering from a thicket of black lashes, came through the doorway: Rose Milligan.

"Lots of letters to-day, Miss Milligan, and we must keep up with them or Miss Sidel will scold us horribly when she comes back. Good heavens! what have you done to your hands?"

She hid her hands behind her and bit her thick lower lip to keep from laughing. "I was just changing a type-writer ribbon when you rang, Mr. Corsey, and you know how—"

"Come here and let me see."

She exhibited her ink-stained fingers. He took them in his and smiled into her eyes. "They're jolly fingers even if they are inky, Miss Milligan. And look there!" He ran a finger over her left palm following a line. "Well, I'd never have allowed you in this office if I'd seen that line before."

"What does it mean? Something dreadful?" she smiled.

"Fearful! Appallingly dangerous: but pleasant. And that line! Double your hand. Yes, over my thumb. . . . You won't be a stenographer long, Miss Milligan, not with a thumb like that!"

His finger began again to trace the lines on her palm. She looked up at him and smiled, full lips a trifle parted. He shivered. There was a knock on the door. "Go wash your hands, Miss Milligan, and come back when they're clean," he ordered.

"Yes, sir?" she grinned, and opened the door.

Mr. Leland Roach, editorial writer and art critic, followed his eyebrows into the room. The hairs that bristled above Mr. Roach's thyroid eyes were like the antennæ of a monstrous spider, and his skin had the slightly

green quality of the order Araneida; but when he spoke he at once entered the order of mammals: his voice was the voice of a Mexican hairless puppy, a puppy of somewhat doubtful sex, yap, yap, yapping.

"Mr. Corsey, I must protest, I must protest formally against your printing that boy MacCallum's editorial on the troubles in the Balkans. The Balkans are my territory. And Mr. MacCallum is ignorant, utterly ignorant of the fundamentals of foreign affairs, and as for the Balkans! Positively, I believe he doesn't know whether Uskub is in Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia, or Turkey!"

"Neither do I," said John. "Do you?"

"Of course! I remember it as well as if I'd been there yesterday. One goes up by rail from Salonika along the lovely river Vardar and then—"

"When were you there?"

"In ninety-five."

"Oh, I see. But after all, Mr. Roach, you have so much to write to-day. The cubist exhibition at—"

"I've already finished the cubists. Miserable fakers! You'll love what I've written, Mr. Corsey! Positively there wasn't a picture exhibited that I couldn't have painted with my left hand. Art! I don't know what we're coming to! It's horrible! Horrible! You will tell MacCallum that the Balkans are my territory, won't you, Mr. Corsey?"

"Yes, if you insist, but I rather like his editorial."

"There's no accounting for tastes!" Mr. Roach's antennæ met in a derisive smirk. "And I shall ask you to tell him. And I'll have something really authoritative for you in about ten minutes. Thank you, Mr. Corsey." Mr. Roach minced out the door. "Yap, yap, yap, yap, yap, yap . . ." Mr. Roach had met a friend in the hall.

"Whew!" John brushed his forehead as if to wipe away a cobweb and sat down heavily. He looked at the letters on his desk, then at the door which led to the outer office. He smiled and rang the bell on his desk.

Rose Milligan entered, exhibiting her plump little hands, palms toward him, fingers spread wide.

"Come here and let me inspect them," said John. "Closer."

She stood beside him, smiling.

"The ink's gone; but you can't wash out that line, Miss Milligan."

"Is it really so very bad?"

"Very bad indeed, but I'm glad it's there."

"Why?"

"Because I have the same line myself. Look!" He put his left hand, palm upward, on the desk and she bent over it. His right arm crept slowly around her waist and his hand rested on her thigh. She trembled a little. His hand moved tentatively. She did not stir. He pressed her closer. The telephone rang. He seized the receiver savagely.

"Hello! . . . Yes, John Corsey. . . . Oh, good afternoon, Mr. Roediger. . . . No, I've heard nothing about it. . . . What? . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Roediger, I can't do that. . . . I don't care whether or not the other papers have promised to suppress it, the *Times* won't. . . . If the elevators in your store are so unsafe that they fall and kill your customers it is a matter of public interest and we'll print an accurate account. . . . I am unable to recall that there is any reason I should do you a personal favor. . . . Take your advertisement out and be damned. If you used four pages instead of one you couldn't buy the *Times*. . . . Yes. Good afternoon, Mr. Roediger." He slammed the receiver on the hook. "Call Mr. MacCallum, Miss Milligan. An elevator's dropped in Roediger's, two women killed and seven hurt. Damned swine!"

"Yes, sir."

"And excuse my abruptness, Miss Milligan," he smiled. "The fellow threatened me."

MacCallum came and went. Roach appeared again. "Now there's something really authoritative on the

Balkans, Mr. Corsey." He placed a typewritten sheet on John's desk. "Have you read my article on the cubists yet?"

"Not yet. I've been busy."

"You'll love it! Just see if you don't!" Roach flirted out the door.

"Lord, what a man!" John groaned.

"Why don't you fire him?" asked Rose Milligan.

"That's scarcely any business of yours, is it, Miss Milligan?"

She flushed and looked down at her fingers.

"I'm sorry." He caught her left hand. "Excuse me. I don't fire him, I suppose, because I pity him. He's such a worm that he couldn't get a job any place else. And he's been here twenty years and people do read what he says about art. He can't help being what he is and it must be fairly awful just to have to live with yourself if you're built like Roach. After all, it's not his fault he's alive. He didn't ask to be born."

"He'd have done better if he'd been a miscarriage," said Rose.

"What do you know about such things?" smiled John.

She protruded her lower lip and tilted her head and grinned. The telephone rang again.

"Hello. . . . Oh, good afternoon, Mr. Leat' . . . Yes. That's just what I told Roediger. . . . Yes, if he takes it out we'll lose about a hundred thousand a year. . . . It's a matter of public interest. . . . Well, you'll have to stand it, Mr. Leather. . . . May I respectfully suggest to you, Mr. Leather, that the *Times* is not owned by you but by my brother Theodore. . . . On the contrary, if he were here, he would take great pleasure in telling Mr. Roediger to go to hell. . . . Sorry, Mr. Leather, but that's my last word. Good-bye." He slammed the telephone on the desk. "Miss Milligan, I think I'll leave for the day. I'm becoming too angry. If there are any more calls you may say that you do not know where to find me. I'll come down this evening and see the story

gets a double-column head on the front page. Good night." He strode to the door, then turned and with a forefinger traced a line inside his left palm. She smiled.

He walked up Kernel Street whistling a Sousa march, crossed the Square and let himself into his home. As the front door slammed behind him there was a sudden movement in the drawing-room. He looked in. Mildred was seated at the tea table. George Milligan was standing on the opposite side of the room.

"Good evening." John entered. "How are you, my dear? Delighted to have run across you, Milligan. I've been making trouble for you to-day. Roediger has withdrawn his advertisement: wanted me to suppress the story of an elevator accident in his store and, of course, I refused."

"Cream or lemon, John?"

"Neither, thanks, nor tea. I've some work to do upstairs."

"You don't really mean we're losing the Roediger advertisement, Corsey?"

"Precisely."

"But we've got to have it! It's a hundred thousand a year beside its circulation value. You'll see there are mighty few women in Chesterbridge who will take a paper that don't tell them about Roediger's latest sale. What are you doing to persuade him not to leave us?"

"Nothing."

"But we've got to! Why, we'd have shown a profit this year! And without Roediger we'll be thirty thousand in the hole at least. If you'll pardon me, Mrs. Corsey, I'll go right downtown and see what I can do to make him reconsider."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said John. "You'll not speak to Roediger or to any agent of his. When they find they need the *Times* they'll come to us and we'll charge them top rates."

"Look here, Corsey, that don't go! I'm responsible for the business management. You can make us as many

enemies as you please by anything you choose to put in your news columns or your editorials, but you can't keep me from trying to keep the paper's head above water."

"Can't I?" said John.

"I haven't the slightest idea what you're quarreling about," Mildred intervened, "but it's a bore to listen to you. Do stop!"

"Certainly," said John. "I beg your pardon, my dear. It won't happen again. There's plenty of time during office hours to give orders to one's employees. And now, if you'll excuse me, I'll trot along upstairs to my work. Good evening." He bowed vaguely and walked upstairs. Then he sat at his window and watched the gray Square turn to deep blue, and slowly alter to a light-speckled black. There was an ugly hole in the right side of the Square, unusual and disconcerting as a lost tooth. Theodore and Pauline had sold the old Chatham house. Its simple Georgian bulk had disappeared. A hole was being dug for the foundations of an apartment house.

Pullen announced dinner. John took an evening paper from his table and walked down to the dining-room. Mildred was already seated, reading a book. They read throughout the meal. Then John walked up to his room and locked his door and sat again and looked over the Square. There was a knock on his door. "Come in," he said.

"I can't, it's locked," called Mildred. He unlocked the door. She stood on the threshold, trembling, as if she were frightened.

"Well?" he questioned.

"John, haven't you anything to say to me?"

"No."

"John, why haven't you asked me what George Miligan was doing here?"

"I wasn't particularly interested. You're entitled to pick your own friends."

"You can't think he's my . . . that I care about him."

"My dear, whatever other feelings I may have for

you, I trust I shall always retain respect. I am, therefore, not likely to become jealous of the son of a drunken Irish saloon servant."

"John, I promise you I don't care about him. I've just met him a few times at charity balls and concerts, and I liked him and—"

"Don't go on talking about him, dear, or you'll make me think 'the lady doth protest too much.'"

"Then why are you so horrible to-night?"

"I wasn't aware that I was being any more offensive than usual."

"You're like an icicle."

"Under the circumstances it scarcely behooves me to blaze with passion."

"What circumstances?"

"I seem to remember a night not very long ago when you locked your door and wouldn't open it and I told you I'd never open it again."

Her eyes widened. "But you didn't mean that!"

"Curious, isn't it, how long two people can live together without knowing the slightest thing about each other?"

"You mean you want to leave me!"

"Not at all. There's Rush. You will continue, I hope, to look well at the head of my dinner table and I, I trust, will contrive to appear presentable at the foot."

"John, you can't freeze me out of your life like this!" She took his arms in her hands and shook him. He remained motionless.

"John, I'm sorry! I'd give anything if I hadn't locked my door. Tell me you'll come to-night!" He did not stir. She took his face in her hands and kissed him: kissed him with an excitement in her lips that seemed the emotion he had always sought. He shuddered and his arms went around her]

The sparrows who inhabited the ampelopsis vine which covered the Corsey house began to chatter. John sat up.

"Well, dear," he said, "that's the happiest night I've had since our marriage." He kissed her. "If only we can go on like this I'll—"

"I'll try," she said.

"So will I." He lay down and drew her head to his shoulder.



Rose Milligan was seated beside John's desk, pencil poised over her notebook. He was reading a cablegram:

Heartily disapprove needlessly antagonizing Roediger. Please adjust difficulty immediately.

THEODORE.

"Cable to London, Miss Milligan: 'Theodore Corsey, St. James's Square. Take great pleasure in offering you my resignation. John.'"

"Is that all, sir?" Rose smiled and her left hand fell casually on the desk, palm upward. His eyes were on her hand but he seemed not to see it.

"Yes. Just get that off at once and finish the letters as quickly as possible. I want to get home early to-night." He turned to his scrap basket and began to sharpen a pencil. She went out.



Rush Corsey, bowlegs encased in his first long trousers, was standing beside the red plush library armchair and listening to his father with so eager an attention that there were furrows between his black eyebrows. "Here's your letter of credit." John took a thin wallet from the library table. "You'll find it rather large. I want you to use a part of it to buy your mother a birthday present. Something nice. If you should happen to see her admire something in one of the Bond Street shops, say a bracelet or a pair of earrings, get her that. If not, use your own judgment."

"I'd better ask Aunt Pauline to help me."

"If you think best. I have entire confidence in your taste and I never thought your Aunt Pauline had much discrimination."

"How much shall I spend?"

"What you consider fitting. I rather imagine you'll find something you like for a thousand or twenty-five hundred. I wish you'd also send your mother a box of flowers from me. I'll cable, of course. That's about all I wanted to say, except perhaps . . . well, if you have time you might write me now and then."

"Of course I will."

"I'll quite understand if you don't. You'll be busy seeing amusing places and new people. Incidentally, you needn't be shy of any people you meet. I rather think Theodore's children may try to impress you a bit by the array of titles they constantly have around the house. Just remember the physiology book we read last summer. From the King and the Duke of Norfolk and the Prime Minister down they're all ninety per cent water like yourself, none of them worthy of any more respect or any less than one of our friends here or one of our servants."

"I understand, sir."

"Well, that's all, except that I hope you have a bully time and take good care of your mother." John rose from the red armchair and smiled and Rush smiled back, a long, embracing smile that made them both look away in shyness. John's fingers ran over his son's curly black hair and patted his shoulder twice, quickly. "Now run get your bags."

Rush hurried upstairs and John walked into the yellow music room and looked over the Square. A steam riveter crashed deafeningly on the steel frame of the apartment house which was rising from the hole where the Chathams' house had stood. He winced. Then Mildred was standing beside him, the sound of her coming submerged by the clash of the steel. She looked at him and he looked

at her. Her face was very sad. They looked out the window in silence.

"Now that I'm going, John, I don't want to go," she said.

"You'll have a bully time in London."

"Maybe . . . but I don't like to run away from things, John."

"You're not running away, dear. Heavens, half your friends leave their husbands for six months every year."

"But not after . . . not after six months like these last we've had together."

"Well, dear, at least we've tried. You did your best and I did mine. And we did have a few nights. It just wasn't in us to feel that way about each other any longer. And even if we couldn't keep it up we . . . well, at least now we're good friends and we're only going through the thing that almost every married couple has to face sooner or later."

The scarlet thread of her mouth began to writhe.

"Don't, dear. Here comes Rush." John bent and kissed her.

"Come on, mother. We only have fifteen minutes!" Rush shouted.

"Pile your things into the motor. Your mother will be there in a moment," called John.



It was a Sunday afternoon late in June. John sat at his desk in the *Times* office dictating to Rose Milligan. "Very truly yours. . . . Whew, it's hot!" He pushed back his chair and looked at the girl beside him. Tiny beads of sweat stood in a line above her upper lip.

"Oh, not so hot as all that," she smiled.

"You're too healthy," he said. "You look impervious to heat or cold or trouble or emotion."

"Oh, not so healthy as all that."

He peered at her a moment. "Where are you going for your vacation, Miss Milligan?" he asked casually.

"Atlantic City."

"Really! I was thinking of running down there myself for two weeks. Where will you be staying?"

"Boarding-house."

"What address?"

"What do you want to know for?" she smiled.

"I might have some letters to dictate," he smiled back. Then he rose and stood looking down at her. "Just read me that last letter, will you?"

She bent over her book and began to read. Her shirt-waist drooped forward from her high round breasts. He stooped above her, leaning closer and closer. She read on.

"My God, your breasts are beautiful!" His right hand slipped through the open neck of her shirtwaist. Her head snapped back. He caught her chin and kissed her.

"You are fresh, ain't you!" She sprang up. "What do you think I am, anyhow?"

He looked at her, his neck thrust forward, his arms hanging. "I don't know," he said slowly.

"Well, what do you think you're doing?"

"That, I should think, would be fairly obvious to one much less intelligent than you, Rose."

"Oh, come on! Don't try to upstage me. I want to be nice and friendly; but I got to know where I get on and off. It isn't as if you weren't a married man, Mr. Corsey."

"What if I am? We can have two weeks in Atlantic City and then . . ."

"Then what?" Her lips curled into an expectant smile.

There was a knock on the door. "Come in!" John shouted. The red head of a small office boy appeared. "Lady to see Miss Milligan," he said, and fled.

"Go see who it is and send her away!" John turned on his heel. Rose opened the door. A handsome woman stood in the doorway, a silver fox dangling from her shoulders.

"Mary!" cried Rose.

"Hell!" John broke a pencil in half and flung the pieces

into his scrap basket. Then he lighted a cigarette and walked to the outer office. "So it's you, Mrs. Denny! Delighted to see you again." He extended his hand to the former Mary Milligan.

"Mrs. Snow now," she smiled.

"Well, you certainly look as if life had treated you well." John stood back and surveyed her.

"Nothing to complain of."

"You've married again and the paralysis is—"

"Cured," she grinned. "I'm the mother of three and my husband's Harlan P. Snow. I guess you've heard of him."

"I regret—"

"Composer of 'Shake a Leg' and 'All the Little Twinkle-toes'!"

"Oh!" said John. "I no longer wonder that your silver fox is more beautiful than even Mrs. Leather's."

"It'll be sables by the winter," she chuckled. "Jake Schubert's putting on a show of Harlan's in September."

"My heartiest congratulations."

"I hope I'm not disturbing you, Mr. Corsey, visiting Rose."

"Not at all. I was just going for a walk. Stay as long as you like. Well, good-bye and good luck."

"And the same to you, Mr. Corsey."

He walked down to the hot, empty street. On the corner he stood a moment. There were two entrances to the *Times* building, one on Purchase Street, one on Cross. He could be sure of Mary Milligan's departure only by standing on the opposite corner, in the sun, in full view of the windows of his office. "Oh, God damn!" He walked to Tooler's and sat an hour drinking mint juleps.

When he returned to the *Times* building he entered by the Cross Street door and approached his office by the corridor from which opened the cubicles of the editorial writers. Leland Roach was hammering his typewriter. There was no other sound. Then a laugh came

from his office, a low, throaty laugh, Mary Milligan's. He stopped, angry.

"How's the boss treating you?" Mary's voice sounded.

"Fine," Rose replied. "Everything's going first rate."

John smiled and listened.

"Have you had another raise?" asked Mary.

"No, but I guess I'll get one soon," snickered Rose.

"The old man's been feeling me up again."

John shriveled against the wall of the corridor, turned, and fled tiptoe to the stairs.

"He always was a chaser," Mary Milligan's chuckle pursued him. "Do you remember that girl Nina . . ."

The little finger of John's left hand snapped down against his palm. He straightened his shoulders and walked into the street.

Ten minutes later he picked up the telephone in his empty house on the Square and asked for his office. Rose answered.

"Miss Milligan," he said, "I just wanted to let you know that I won't be back this afternoon. And I've been thinking a bit about your future. It seems to me that your talents are not employed to their full capacity in my office. I'd like to put you in charge of our uptown information bureau at once. That will mean fifteen dollars more a week. Will you report there to-morrow morning at ten? . . . No thanks necessary. . . . No. I'll manage all right. . . . That's all. . . . Sorry, I'm very busy. Good-bye." He hung up the telephone. "Little bitch!" He got up and stood, head hanging. "Oh, ugly! Ugly!"



John, naked, razor in hand, was scowling at the clinging pygmies who were beating the upper steelwork of the apartment house. A knock sounded on the bathroom door and Pullen's voice called: "Mr. Johnny, you're wanted on the phone. It's Pounder. Your mother's sick."

"What's the matter?" He drew a careful stroke over his Adam's apple.

"It's serious!"

"Why didn't you tell me!" He dropped the razor and ran down to the telephone.

"What is it, Pounder?"

"I don't know, Mr. Johnny. When Sarah went in just now your mother wouldn't wake."

"Dead!"

"No, but she's mighty sick. She woke up finally but she can't speak and can't seem to move except her left hand."

"Telephone all the local doctors. Telephone Miss Eleanor. I'll come at once with Dr. Athyn. It's a stroke!" He dropped the telephone, ran upstairs, wrenched on his clothing, ran downstairs, shoes unlaced, shirt unbuttoned, sprang into the Locomobile roadster which was waiting at the door and swung it around the corner to Tom Athyn's house. A minute later the Locomobile was crashing through the city streets toward the Park and Kingsale.

"Slow down, John," said Tom. "Slow down, I say! You almost killed that woman! I'll switch off your engine if you don't." John slowed to forty. The car swung into the river road and again his foot pressed the accelerator. A park guard blew his whistle. "You'll be arrested, John!" "Not till we get there." A mounted policeman reined his horse in the center of the road and raised his hand. John swung the car and ripped past the horse's nose. "Slow down! John! Hell, I won't stand it!" Tom leaned to the switch. John raised his toe a trifle. A blurred clutter of houses. The grade crossing. The long hill. The high wall of Kingsale.

He ran upstairs to his mother's room. There were servants and doctors outside her door. He entered. Below the high mahogany backboard of the bed her face was rigid as an ivory death mask. Her eyes were closed.

His fingers caught her pulse. "Mother!" he whispered. She did not answer. "Mother!" Her eyes did not open; but her mouth opened stiffly and a sound crawled out of it, an ugly sound, thick, as if her tongue were a cotton

wad. "Does she want water?" John wheeled savagely to the figures by the open door. "I think not, Mr. Corsey." A doctor turned from Tom Athyn. "She's just had several spoonsful."

"Then what does she want?"

"Move away a minute, John, and I'll try to find out." Tom approached the bed. John got up. Tom applied a stethoscope, rose quickly, walked to the bathroom, came back quickly and drove a hypodermic into Mrs. Corsey's arm. She groaned. John's fists clenched. Then she began to speak, making the same sound over and over, a blurred sound but recognizable, "Bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . ." Each time she breathed she made the sound. Tom Athyn was listening again. He rose and took the tubes of the stethoscope out of his ears. "Have you sent for Eleanor?" he asked. "Yes, but not for Bobby," said John.

"If he's in New York, there's not much use sending, I'm afraid."

"Tom! You can't let her die!"

"I'm sorry, John."

"Isn't there anything!"

"We'll phone for oxygen, but . . ." He summoned the other doctors with a nod and they left John alone with his mother. He sat on the bed and took her left hand in his left hand.

"Mother," he whispered. "Mother!"

"Bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . . bored . . ." the thick voice which was not her voice went on complaining.

"Mother!"

"Bored . . . bored . . . bored . . ."

He looked at the white height of her brow and the thin arch of her nose and his eyes widened as if he were a frightened child.

"Bored . . . bored . . . bored."

Abruptly she ceased to speak. His fingers clutched her pulse. It was beating. He sat still, shivering, holding her

left hand in his left, his forefinger reaching to her pulse. Suddenly her eyes opened. She looked at him and a smile came into her face, her own smile, a smile that thanked him for existing and for loving her. "Baby," she said, and her fingers tried to pat his hand. Her eyes closed. She was still smiling. He turned his head away and covered his mouth with his right hand to stifle the sounds which were rising in his throat. His left hand still held her left hand and he was trying to tell her by the clutch of his fingers how much he cared. Then he became aware of a difference in her fingers. They were growing cold.



"Take another drink, John," Tom Athyn ordered, and John automatically reached for the decanter which contained the Oil of Joy, poured, and drank. "Now promise me you'll go abroad at once," said Tom. "And not to join Mildred in England."

"I'll have to join her. If I didn't everybody would think—"

"To hell with what anybody thinks! Can't you understand, John, you're ill! If you won't go and raise a little hell, do at least a few of the things you've wanted to do all your life and haven't done, you'll have a breakdown that will keep you traveling from Carlsbad to Nauheim the rest of your life. Go to Paris and blow off the roof of Montmartre, or if Paris is too full of Americans for you, go to Italy or Egypt or India; but let yourself go!"

"I'll go to London."

"To join a wife you've stopped living with, who bores you and—"

"She doesn't bore me. And there's Rush."

"Who'll be so busy playing with his cousins that he'll hardly speak to you. Lord, John! you can't make a life out of loving Rush. You've got enough affection in you to crush half a dozen children. You need a woman to—"

"Maybe I do, but . . . Oh, go away now, Tom! I'm so tired."

"Sorry. Good night." Tom rose, patted John's shoulder, and walked to the door. "Oh, there's one thing I must ask you." He turned. "I'll phone and make arrangements for the funeral. Which of them do you employ? Bingham?"

"Of course," said John, and began to laugh. "That, Dr. Athyn, is the chief value of belonging to an old established family: one knows at once which undertaker to employ." He continued to laugh.

"Shut up, John, and take another drink."

"I can't. It's funny. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha."



"What are you going to do with Kingsale?" John looked hard at Theodore; and Theodore looked away, struck a match, and lighted a cigarette. They were standing by the fireplace of a long Adam drawing-room whose six windows opened on St. James's Square. A blazing August sun was beating through the half-drawn blinds. Mildred and Pauline were seated, talking, at the other end of the room. They were dressed in black.

"I really don't quite know." Theodore flipped the match into the fireplace. "You see I'm planning to buy Auburn Hall from Sherbury. He's rather hard up and it would be a pleasant place if one restored the stairway. You've never been there, have you?"

"Yes, I've been there," said John.

"You wouldn't like to buy Kingsale from me, would you?" Theodore looked up.

"Of course I'd like to but I haven't the money."

"How about your father-in-law?"

"Still very much alive and not inclined to buy houses for his daughter. Besides, we'll have his place eventually."

"I don't quite know what I'll do then," Theodore blew three smoke rings toward the ceiling. "I'd like to keep Kingsale as a pied-à-terre in America but I'll probably never go back and it costs so like the devil to keep up; just the hothouses alone cost—"

"I know," said John.

"And the land's so valuable now. Why, I could turn the whole thing into building lots: the city has crept right out to the east wall. And eight hundred acres of Chesterbridge building lots are worth something."

"I hope you won't do that." John stared. "After all, it is our family place and you're the head of the family."

"But I've established myself in England."

"Do you really like it here, Ted? Do you really like being an expatriate?"

"I put it the other way," Theodore smiled tolerantly. "I've come home after a sojourn in the Colonies."

"A damned long sojourn: three hundred years! And do they really accept you here?"

"Of course."

"When are you going to get a title?"

"When the King is gracious enough to—"

"Drip, Ted! You've been backing the wrong horse, I suppose, contributing to the Conservative campaign fund instead of the Liberal, and there hasn't been a Conservative Government since you came here."

"I am naturally a Conservative."

"Well, at least you probably won't have to wait much longer. If Carson and F. E. Smith start fighting in Ireland, Asquith will go smash in a week. I suppose that means Balfour. Do you know him well?"

"He was coming to luncheon to-day but can't. Plitt's coming."

"I should think he'd be too busy with this Franco-German squabble. The Cabinet must be sitting rather continuously. As usual they'll adjust it at the last minute, I suppose, just before the first shot is fired."

"Of course. Ireland's the place there'll be a real war. By the bye, John, Mr. and Mrs. Leather lunched with us the other day. He's still very angry about that Roediger matter. He wanted either to sell me his stock or to buy mine. I told him that I should never consider selling so long as you wished to remain editor."

"Thanks. That was nice of you, Ted, but I don't want you to hold your stock on my account unless you're satisfied that—"

"Of course I'm satisfied; but I quite understand Leather's point of view. You haven't made the paper pay, yet. He gets no dividends from his investment. Naturally he expects to be recompensed in some way. A slight deference to his views as to the policy of the paper would . . . Hello, there's Milly Northdown!" Theodore twisted his sentence away from the cloud rising in John's eyes. A tall blond woman trailing mauve streamers was bearing down on Pauline and Mildred. "Millicent, Duchess of Northdown," Theodore whispered impressively, waved a hand in welcome and started toward the lower end of the room.

"Ted!" John checked him. "Just stay one moment till we've had this Leather business out. If you think I'm going to—" A burst of laughter at the lower end of the room cut his sentence. He shrugged his shoulders petulantly and turned. Then he smiled. "Whose is that amazing red hair?" he asked.

"Edith Fitzgerald's. It's been red only two seasons. It was blond before that." Theodore started again toward the ladies.

"Who's she? Another duchess?" He laid a detaining hand on Theodore's arm.

"Much rarer. She's the only woman in London who has a salon. And on nothing. She's American, too. Some place west of the Alleghenies. Fitzgerald was in the Guards, killed in South Africa. Left her three infants and penniless; but every one's always at her little box in Curzon Street."

The tense vitality of the body under the red hair was bursting into gesticulations.

"What's she live on?" asked John.

"A Turk, to whom she was engaged, died and left her something in his will, I believe. Now, John, we really must join the ladies."

They walked down the long room. Mrs. Fitzgerald turned and her eyes struck John like a wave of warm sea water, engulfing, irresistible. They were green eyes, but so like his own that when they looked at him it was as if he were looking at himself. They widened a trifle and he was aware that his eyes, too, were staring. He took her hand and they smiled at each other as if they shared a bewildering secret.

"Oh, you've met before," said Pauline.

"Yes," said Mrs. Fitzgerald.

John's hand tightened on her hand and they smiled again. Then a spate of arrivals swept them apart: Lord Portship, Irish, porcine, jolly; Mr. Lyall, a white mole who dug in the Valley of the Kings; Major Rivers of the Grenadiers, thin, dark, a polo player; Princess Brandino, a toothy English girl who had married an Italian under-secretary; Mrs. Lowndes of South Carolina, who liked England for the huntin' and shootin'; Lord Arthur Plantagon of the Foreign Office, a vulture neck protruding from hunched shoulders, doe's eyes above a vulture nose; Lady Thetis Rutledge, blond, ornate, who was called "the most photographed woman in England" and liked it; Mr. Plitt of the Cabinet, round, benign. "So sorry, Mrs. Corsey, I have to dash right back to Number 10, meeting again at two!" He shook Pauline's hand. Then Mrs. Fitzgerald hailed him. "Oh, Plitty! Where's the war started? Belfort or Belfast?" "Please don't ask questions, Edith, I'll just have to lie." "That's all we expect of you, Plitty dear, now that you're a Minister of the Crown." "Then let's go in to luncheon and not wait for Kate," said Pauline. "Kate Blough?" "Yes." "Heavens, don't wait! I'm famished and if Kate smells powder she'll stay at Whitehall all day giving the generals orders."

They went in to luncheon and John found himself between the blond vacancy of Lady Thetis Rutledge and the empty chair of Lady Kate Blough. Mrs. Fitzgerald was opposite, between Mr. Lyall and Lord Portship.

John watched the quick movements of her hands and the curl and quiver of her lips. Her eyes met his. She smiled: smiled as if they were partners in a hidden enterprise so vivid with delight and danger that she could scarcely wait to be alone with him. "Thanks." He raised his sherry to her.

"I hear the French cheered Goshen as he drove by the *Chambre des Députés* this morning," Lady Thetis was drawling at his right ear. "Poor devils, I'd not like to be in Goshen's boots when they discover we won't fight. They'll be screaming 'Perfide Albion' again."

"And they'll be quite right," said John.

"Whaaat!" drawled Lady Thetis, and took advantage of a word from Colonel Rivers to turn her celebrated shoulder to John so that again he was isolated and could allow his eyes as well as his ears to concentrate on Mrs. Fitzgerald. She was arguing across the table with Lord Arthur Plantagon.

"Bosh, Arthur! The Germans have a great civilization. They've produced everything, except gentlemen and statesmen."

"The marks of a civilization." Lord Arthur's vulture neck protruded a smile.

"The adornments. But in England even the adornments are like high hats on South Sea Islanders."

"Oh, Edith!"

"Surely you don't think you English are civilized! You're barbarians. You've less sense of life than any people in the world except Americans and Colonials: less sense of living. You make a mess of love and a worse mess of cooking. You don't know wines or produce them. You've never produced a first-rate musician or a first-rate artist. You—"

"How about poets?"

"Leave out Shakespeare and your poems are the dying cries of sensitive people who've remained in England or the joyful ones of those who've escaped to Italy. And I don't admit the glory of even the great English gentle-

man. You're all under the domination of your butlers and valets. You're not like Hungarians or Turks. They do what they want to do and damn the consequences. You do what you think other people expect you to want to do. You're all in chains. All squashed into the same mold. Look at my boy at Osborne! What are you doing to him? He was free and gay and spontaneous when he went there. You put him in a uniform which was cut to a pattern a century or two ago and hasn't been changed since. And you're cutting his mind to a pattern that's as fixed and old and changeless. He's even beginning to disapprove of me!"

"Oh, I'm sure he's not!" Mildred Corsey, on Plantagon's right, smiled across the table at Mrs. Fitzgerald. "He's a darling. My Rush is so fond of him. And he's so good-looking! What luck that he inherited your glorious red hair!"

A silence of malicious delight flickered up the table.

"Yes," smiled Mrs. Fitzgerald, "it's the only known case of the inheritance of acquired characteristics."

"Edith, you're unconquerable!" Mr. Plitt roared appreciation. Then there was a scraping of chairs. Lady Kate Blough was striding down the room, her horse-face smiling triumphantly. "So sorry!" She gripped Pauline's hand and flung herself into the vacant seat on John's left. "Well!" she neighed. "It's wonderful! I can't tell you what I know, but I've just come from the Admiralty and seen where every ship of the fleet is stationed and Winston has been too magnificent! He's—he's rehabilitated himself! You'll all be able to speak to him again! You'll all have to invite him to dinner at once! He's been magnificent!"

"Does that mean the fleet's in the North Sea or the Irish?" asked Mrs. Fitzgerald.

"Of course I can't say!" Lady Kate frowned. "But before the month's out, you'll all receive Winston!" She attacked her sole, leaving the table to contemplate the pleasures of again receiving Winston. Then she at-

tacked John on the iniquity of Americans sending funds to Irish home-rulers, attacked him so vociferously that Mrs. Fitzgerald's voice became only an indistinct murmur.

As they returned to the drawing-room, Mr. Plitt left for Number 10 and Mrs. Fitzgerald shook hands with Pauline. John detached himself quickly from Lady Kate and stood behind Mrs. Fitzgerald. "Sorry I have to hurry also, Pauline," he said. "Jolly luncheon. I've an appointment with a dentist and Mrs. Fitzgerald has kindly offered to give me a lift. Good-bye." He followed Mrs. Fitzgerald to the door. "Rotten liar, you are," she smiled. "No American ever went to a London dentist." They entered her car. He sat beside her. Then abruptly he was embarrassed. "Every one in London seems to have a Rolls," he made conversation. "Only mine isn't really," she said. "There's a rotten little Renault engine under the hood. But I do love swank, and it's so good for one's credit." The car ground forward. She was looking straight ahead, her mouth drawn down as if she saw in the distance ahead unhappiness. "Well?" She turned to him.

He had nothing to say and he said, "Have you really three children?"

"Yes."

"But how and why? It doesn't seem like you."

"Oh, the first was innocence, the second was carelessness, and the third just damned bad luck."

"For God's sake don't let's talk this way any longer!" he blurted. "It's not me and it's not you and I want to know you, all about you."

"Then why talk?" she smiled, and again she looked ahead.

They sat in silence and in silence entered her little house on Curzon Street. There was a music room, a piano in green lacquer, and beyond, a low divan covered by a black and gold brocade. She perched herself in the far corner of the divan, drew her feet up under her and looked at him a long time. "Well, I don't know what to do about it," she smiled hopelessly.

"There's just one thing to do." He stepped closer.

"Oh, no!" A white hand flickered up. "That's fifteen years too late. If we were both eighteen . . ." A silence. She looked down at her twisted ankles and a long pink nail scraped their silk covering. "I think you'd better go now and not see me again," she said.

"Why!" He grasped at the scraping nail. She shook her hand quickly in the air. "Don't! Please don't! I'm trying to be reasonable and I don't feel reasonable. You're a married man with a son whom you love and a beautiful wife whom you probably love more than you think you do. I've three children."

"What have they to do with us?"

"Everything." Her eyes opened very wide and her cheeks sank below her high cheek-bones as if she were sucking them. "Maybe you don't understand after all," she said. "But I don't feel cheaply about this. That's what's holding me. That's what's wrong. Do you understand? I don't feel cheaply about you. Not one cheap emotion. And that's rather terrible."

"It's wonderful! And I swear to you it's so with me! When I saw your eyes I . . . well, I don't see why I should love myself, but it seemed to me that you were somehow me, the other part of me that I'd been missing all my life. Didn't you have—"

"Yes. . . . That's what makes anything so impossible. If we're to escape each other, we've got to escape now. We've got to stop before we begin. It's got to be nothing—or everything. And I don't want that and neither do you."

"I do!"

She shook her head. "You don't want to give up your son and I can't hurt mine as it would hurt them if I . . . well, I'd be correspondent in your divorce."

"It needn't mean—"

"It would. I know. We'd get drowned by our own love. We'd be . . . We'd have to be! Wouldn't we?" She stared at him. Then her shoulders shrugged, she smiled

and turned her palms out in a gesture of futility. "So let's agree we have only a sudden little *béguin* for each other. And as we're ourselves—oh, very sophisticated and very tired of *béguins*—we'll say good-bye without even having kissed." She held out her hand.

He shook his head and looked at her eyes which were his eyes. "I've needed you too long," he said. "And it's a crime, a crime for us not to have each other, a crime against everything that's beautiful in life!"

Her arms crossed over her breasts and she rocked on the divan as if she were in agony.

"I won't do it!" She stood up. "There would be no end! You'll go away, go away now. Would there be an end?" she challenged his eyes.

A silence.

"No," he said.

"Then go! We'd hurt too many people, too many people we love. Please go!"

"All right." His chin bent down to his chest.

She held out her hand and her eyes closed. He took her hand.

"Oh!" she moaned. "There's a spot on your lower lip that I—"

He crushed her mouth to his. She pushed him away, shaking her head from side to side.

"Now go! Go quickly! Go!" She staggered back to the divan and lay, eyes closed, mouth a little open, left hand drooping to the floor. He turned slowly and walked to the door. Then he looked back. She had not stirred. Her mouth was still a little open. He crossed the room in three leaping strides. He kissed her mouth, her eyes; her mouth, her throat, her breasts.

A bell rang sharply. "Run upstairs! Quickly!" She wrenched away from him. He dived to the hall, snatched his hat, and took the stairs two at a stride. She followed. A butler passed through the hall as they reached the upper floor. "I've a headache and can't see any one!" she called over the banister. "In here, dear." She drew

him through a door into her bedroom. "I'm so sorry, sweetheart." She patted his cheeks and kissed his eyes with swift little kisses. A step was mounting the stairs. She stood by the door listening. A knock. "Yes."

"Mr. Plitt, madam. Says he must speak to you a moment, extremely important. May he come up?"

"I'll be down at once." Her jaw tightened.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" She turned back to John, kissed him, and began to powder her face and arrange her hair. "I'll get rid of him in a moment, dear." A gesture and a wriggle and she had shed her dress. "I'm ill, you see," she smiled, and flung on a green and mauve tea gown. "Two minutes!" She kissed his ear and hurried downstairs.

He listened. "Hello, Plitty dear!" Plitt's voice rumbled indistinctly. "Perhaps. I'll see. I'll bring it down to you." Her feet were hurrying up the stairs.

"One second, darling," she whispered as she passed John. Then she stooped by the head of her bed and picked up a dispatch case, an obviously official dispatch case. She did not look at John as she hurried out.

He glanced around the room. There were cigarettes, trays of cigarettes. There had been no cigarette smoke on her lips. There was a box of cigars. A faint odor of stale smoke came from a closet behind him. He opened the closet door: there were clothes, the clothes of a gentleman, a rotund gentleman. The front door closed. John stepped to the window and peered down. Mr. Plitt was bounding into his car, the dispatch case in his hand. "Good Lord!" John turned and faced the door, his right hand running quickly over and over his hair. Her feet came swiftly. She whirled through the door and turned the key.

"Gone, darling!" She was smiling as she had smiled, smiling as if nothing had happened. John stood and peered at her, his hand still running over and over his hair. She stopped smiling.

"I think I'd better go," said John. She did not answer, but her quivering lips and eyes were imploring him. He

looked at the floor. "Good-bye." He walked toward her and the door. He held out his hand. She did not take it nor did she speak. She looked at him, making a silence that he had to answer.

"It's just not good enough," he said. "If it's—if I'm to give up my son— Damn it! How can I follow Plitt! He was here last night! He's been living here with you! I suppose his pajamas are under that pillow now!"

"Yes," she said quietly, "but that's done. That's over. Why do you care?"

"Why!"

"You've been living with your wife, haven't you? I don't care."

"No. I've not been near her for four months."

"Then it's been some other woman."

"It's been no one."

A puzzled look crept into her eyes and out. "But if it had been, surely you don't think I'd have cared. We hadn't met. Neither of us even knew the other was in the world. We're beginning something new, fresh, from to-day."

"You've been Plitt's mistress."

"Yes. Why do you care? If it hadn't been Plitt, it would have had to have been some one else, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, that's you!"

"Yes. Isn't it you?"

"No."

"What are you then? What are you looking for?" Her brows drew to a tortured bewilderment. "You're not one of the children who expect what I have to give from the body of a virgin?"

"Not from a virgin; but from a woman who wouldn't—"

"You are!" A gashed silence. "Oh, Lord, you are!" She stared at him. "And I thought you were . . ." She whirled and unlocked the door. Her head bent to her crooked elbow and she leaned against the wall, sobbing:

"Oh, go! Go quickly! I thought you were like me! I thought you were what I'd wanted all my life! I—"

"It's not fair to me to—to—to—" he stammered.

"Oh, go! Go, you child! Go, go, go!"

He hurried past her and down the stair and into Curzon Street. Then he put his hand to his head. He had forgotten his hat. He ran his hand over his hair. A hansom was klip-klopping down the street. He hailed it and stumbled in. "H-Henry Heath, P-Piccadilly," he stut-tered.



"It's war!" John looked up from the *Morning Post* and grinned at Theodore.

"What's so funny?" Theodore scowled.

"Nothing; but don't pretend it doesn't excite you, Ted. My Lord! think of being alive and young during a European war! Confound it, I know I ought not to be glad, but I am glad. There's something worth waking for in the morning now. There's romance in the world again. Do you think the War Office might let me go out with the Expeditionary Force as a correspondent?"

"You can ask Plitt."

"Does he control that?"

"Yes."

"Then the Expeditionary Force can go to hell. I don't like him. I'll run over to Paris and try the French. At least I'll be able to write some articles and pick up a bunch of correspondents. We'll give the *Times* the best war service in the world; then watch our circulation jump. I had a cable from Milligan this morning: we've gained twelve thousand this week just on the mobilizations."

"You'd better go home and do what you can to get America into it."

"Into it! You don't think there's a chance of America fighting?"

"No. I suppose not. All the newspapers sound positively pro-German, including the *Times*."

"Or pro-American. We've no business in it."

"It's a threat to civilization."

"Drip, Ted! It's a threat to the British Empire and you can't very well expect Kansas farmers to die for the House of Lords and the descendants of George the Third."

"America ought to be with us."

"Us?"

"Don't forget I'm English now, and for good. Incidentally, I've decided to sell Kingsale."

"What! . . . Why?"

"I need the money. A half-hour ago I gave two hundred thousand pounds to start the Red Cross fund."

"You! . . . Have you picked your title yet?"

"Go to hell!"

"Viscount Corsey of Auburn, I bow to you. Or is Kingsale the price of a mere barony?"

"Shut up, John."

"Arms: A million dollars or, rampant, on a field of corpses."

"John, if you weren't my brother I'd bash your head in."

"Well, damn it, go ahead and try! I'm sick about Kingsale. I love the place!"

"Then why don't you buy it?"

"I can't. You know I can't. But I hate to see you swap it for a dirty little English title."

"That's enough about titles, John. And if you don't like the way I'm running my life you can jolly well clear out of my house."

"Thanks. I will. So long." He walked toward the door.

"Oh, hell, John! Don't let's fight," called Theodore. "God knows we have enough to be happy about. Here's the war and we're too old for it and our sons are too young for it. Some of our friends who have sons of twenty-one or twenty-two will probably lose them."



"Good morning, father." Rush thumped into John's room on the Square swinging his riding boots with long strides of his bowlegs. "Sleep well?"

"Thanks." John lifted his breakfast tray from his knees. "Did you?"

"Very, after five," grinned Rush, taking the tray and placing it on the center table. "The dance was a corker. It's the best Easter holiday I've ever had." He sat on the bed and took John's hand. "Lord, what a lot of lines you have!" he said.

John drew his hand away and lighted a cigarette. "Where are you bound now?"

"Jack Athyn and I are going to ride in the Park each morning till the holidays are over."

"That reminds me," said John. "I got a letter from your mother this morning. She's working like a nigger in the hospital and she wants you to go over and join her for the summer holidays."

"Do you mind?" Rush looked hard into his father's eyes.

"Of course not, if you care to go. What have you been planning?"

"Jack Athyn and I want to go over together."

"What will you do?"

"Well, would you mind if we joined the American Ambulance Corps?"

"You're too young, Rush. Finish your school first. Then—"

"Then the war will be over and we'll have missed the greatest thing that will ever happen in our lives. And besides we want really to do something. We want to help lick the Germans."

"What did they ever do to you?"

"Nothing. But look what they did to the Belgians! We had a Belgian lady talking at School. It was fierce! They're the enemies of civilization."

"That's a rather large remark, isn't it? And, if they are, so's everybody else who helped make the war."

"But the others aren't fighting the way the Germans are. And the others are making war to end war, end war for good, make it impossible ever to happen again."

"I'm afraid you've been taking Mr. Wells seriously." John raised his eyebrows.

"Don't you? I think he's wonderful."

"I wish he were."

"You do want the Allies to win, don't you?"

"Of course."

"But why, if you think they're not going to make a peace that will last? If they're going to make a rotten peace, they're almost as bad as the Germans."

"Almost. If they were honest, honestly wanted what they say they want, they'd ask Wilson to mediate. They know he'd be fair."

"Then you don't want me to join the Ambulance Corps."

"That's up to you. I'd rather you stayed at school unless you feel very strongly indeed that you must go."

"Then you'd really mind the other thing." Rush looked at the toes of his riding boots which were glistening in a patch of morning sunlight.

"What other thing?"

"Well, Jack and I have really been thinking of enlisting in the British Army."

"Good Lord, Rush! Promise me you won't do that!"

"You'd really mind?"

"Mind! Good Lord, boy! I . . . They'd probably not take you anyhow because of your age."

"I'm big enough and I could lie about my age. One of the fellows at school has a brother who said he was born at London, Ontario, and got into the Canadian army when he was only fifteen."

"Well, would you mind promising me, cross your heart and hope to die, that you won't enlist?"

"Sure!" grinned Rush. "But you don't mind my going over, do you?"

"No."

"I think I'll work my way on a cattle boat."

"Why that?"

"I'd like to. You can give me the money my passage would cost and I'll use it for something else."

"What's the secret?"

"Well, the truth is—that Belgian woman—you see, she spoke and it was pretty fierce and I promised her two hundred dollars and I haven't got it."

"I have," said John. "There's my wallet on the bureau."

"I can't take it, you know, unless you'll let me go on the cattle boat."

"All right, go ahead, sleep in a stall with a steer if you want, sleep in anything but a British uniform. Now get out. I want to dress."

Rush left and John walked to his bathroom and began to shave. A shadow fell across his chin: the shadow of the apartment house. "Damn it!" He scowled at the huge building. "I'd like to blow it up!" He drew his razor savagely down his throat and cut himself; but he did not notice the cut: Rush was riding around the corner toward the Athyns' house. "My God, suppose he should enlist! . . ." When again he looked into his shaving mirror the soap on his chin was a dry powder and the blood from the cut had dried.



"Well, it's been a pretty good old war." John and Tom Athyn were leaning over the rail of the *Mauretania*, watching the passengers from the London boat train straggle up the gangplank. "What with visiting fronts and watching the *Times* boom and starting the evening edition I don't mind telling you I've enjoyed every minute of it."

"You're not the only one, I guess," said Tom. "Almost everybody who hasn't got a son or a brother in it is lying awake nights for fear peace may break out. How's Mildred this morning?"

"Slept well," said John, "but I'm glad we came aboard last night; she's nervous as a shell-shock case and a last minute embarkation would just about have finished her. How long do you think it will be before she's in shape again?"

"Three or four months if she'll really stay quiet. I'd like to give her an old-fashioned Weir Mitchell rest cure. She never should have been allowed to work in that hospital. And for two years! It's a wonder she's alive."

"Where do you suppose the youngsters are?" John scanned the dock. "All the passengers from that train seem to be aboard."

"There's probably a second section."

"What a time they've had! And haven't they aged! When I saw them in their scout uniforms I felt as if they were two young lieutenants just back on leave from Ypres."

"Yes, they look too much like soldiers to suit me," said Tom.

"I'm not afraid of that. Rush promised me he wouldn't enlist. The only thing that worries me is the chance that they'll get messed up by some dirty woman. I've been meaning to talk to Rush for years, but you know how it is—one never does, one's always too embarrassed to talk about such things to one's own son."

"You needn't worry about that. If there's anything about the cleanliness of the demimonde that Rush doesn't know, it's because he's forgotten."

"What do you mean?"

"I talked to them last year, before they went over the first time, told them I knew they wouldn't be good but please to be careful, and gave them all the necessary information."

"You old scoundrel! Thanks. I'm obliged to you. Damn! There's the whistle and they're not aboard yet!"

Voices were crying through the ship: "All ashore that's going ashore."

"Where in hell can they be?"

"Might have missed the train," said Tom. "Let's go down and see if there's a telegram."

There were two telegrams. John's read:

Please forgive me. I've broken my promise. Couldn't go home and leave so much to be done here. Enlisted this morning. Best love to mother.

RUSH.

Tom's read:

Been an ass and enlisted. Apologies. Love.

JACK.

"The damned little fools!" Tom exploded. John walked to the deck very quickly without speaking. He stood by the rail, his head in his hands. The *Mauretania* began to move. The little finger of his left hand clicked down against the palm. He wheeled, hurried to the writing-room, and wrote:

Dear Rush:

I understand. And I'm proud of you. You've seen a thing to do, therefore you've done it. That's like a Corsey.

Of all the unsaid things that I want to say to you now I'll write just one: If ever when you're out at the front, existence seems dull or terrible and you think your life maybe hasn't counted for anything, please remember this: It has counted, it's counted more than you'll ever know: just by existing you've made my life worth living. And now, because you've followed your own best instinct, I love you more than ever.

God bless you. I'm proud of you. Proud.

Your

FATHER.



"Hail, hail, the gang's all here! What the hell do we care! What the hell do we care!" Election night. The Republican Club was marching down Purchase Street.

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here!" The Democrats were marching up Kernel Street singing the same meaningless song.

John was seated at his desk in the office of the *Times*. From the window behind him a rope stretched to a window on the opposite side of Purchase Street and from the rope hung a mammoth portrait of black mustaches, flashing black eyes, and waving black hair, framed by the exhortation: "For Governor! Wayne Sinclair!"

The door of his office opened abruptly and Eleanor walked in. "Hello, dear," said John. "What's the news from Headquarters? Do you think we've elected him?"

"Close." Eleanor dropped into a chair and threw her plain black hat on the editorial table. "You haven't a secret virtue, have you, John?"

"Such as?"

"A bottle in your desk."

"No, but I can send a boy. What'll you have, dear?"

"Gin."

John walked to the outer office, gave the order, and returned. "You look done up," he said.

"I am." She leaned heavily on the table.

"Then you won't mind sitting quietly a minute till I've finished this editorial. Wilson's written another note and I'm trying to get a comment done for the first edition."

"What's he said?"

"The usual drip: Threats without action."

"What are you saying?"

"Well, it starts this way: 'Words, words, words! We have had enough of these!'"

"That seems rather complete," Eleanor smiled. "Why do you add any more? But you don't really mean it, do you? You don't really want us to go to war."

"I certainly do. Why, damn it, Eleanor, if we don't, the Allies will be licked! Then it will be our turn."

"Bosh!"

"Not bosh. They're fighting our fight and they're fighting for our kind of a civilization."

"Including that ardent republican, the Czar."

"France and England at least. It's our duty to—"

"Oh, John, don't! You used to be able to think before Rush enlisted. Why don't you just say frankly: 'Everybody ought to be helping my son!'"

"It's not that."

"It is, dear. You're like every one else. Every time any one sacrifices something to even the faintest foggiest conviction it immediately becomes a certainty. Then it becomes a moral imperative. You've given Rush to the war, so it's the duty of every one in the United States to give a son."

"I didn't give him. He gave himself. I was trying to keep him out."

"What's the latest from him?"

"Nothing since he got his lieutenancy in the Grenadiers."

There was a sharp rap on the door. "Come in," called John, and a boy entered with a slip of paper. "First returns!" John read it. "Seventh ward. Whew, that's bad! Wayne's beaten three to one." A shadow of a smile fled across Eleanor's lips and disappeared.

"Too bad," she said.

"You don't seem exactly heartbroken," said John.

Her lips began to quiver, and suddenly her head dropped to the table and she began to cry. "Eleanor! You poor thing! What's the matter? Buck up! Damn it, where's that gin? Eleanor! You can't care that much! You mustn't care that much!" He took her shoulders and shook her. Her head rose from the table and she rocked from side to side, crying silently. "Eleanor!"

"I do care that much, John," she said. "And I want"—her teeth caught her lower lip—"I want Wayne to lose!" Her head thumped on the table.

"Eleanor, sit up and behave yourself!" He shook her. "You're tired and hysterical. Pull yourself together!" She did not raise her head. "At least you might stop ruining the varnish of my new table."

"Sorry." She raised her head and wiped her eyes, trying to smile. There was a rap on the door and a boy entered with a bottle and another slip of paper. John drew the glass stopper and poured. She drank the gin. He looked at the paper. "Eighth ward," he said. "Wayne's beaten four to one. What the devil did you mean, Eleanor?"

"What I said. . . . If Wayne's beaten, I'll get him back. . . . If he wins . . . he's gone for good." She sagged in her chair as if she were an exhausted old woman.

"Gone where? What on earth?"

"Gone from me!" she cried, and her back suddenly straightened and she leaned forward, gripping the arms of her chair. "Haven't you seen what's happened to him, John? Haven't you seen what he's become? John, he's changed! Changed utterly! He used to be simple and sweet and fine. Well—Galahad. I know you never liked him because he was that. But I did. He was so simple, like a child and he could laugh, yes, even a little at himself, and he loved me for myself, not trying to change me, loved me just as I was; then he went into politics. And that day he began to be not himself but the person he thought the public expected him to be. He imagined a character that the public would like and started to be that character. And, God, how I hate what the public likes!" She rose and stared into the street, and her fists clenched as if the public were a monster lurking there, a monster that she wanted to kill. Then she pointed to the picture of her husband which hung above the street. "That! That's what he's become! That!"

"Oh, take it easy, Eleanor! You're hysterical."

"I wish I were. It's true, John. You know how anybody who plays a part long enough becomes the part, the part becomes him. That's happened to Wayne. He decided to be the friend of the dear people, Lincolnian, only not like Lincoln, much more moral and twentieth-century. He wanted the support of the churches, so he came

out for the Mann Act and prohibition. That was bad enough; but then he began to teach Sunday school and to wear those horrible clothes, gave up Davies and bought black suits ready-made at Roediger's! I didn't care when he sold the Rolls and got a Buick, but when some one told him he talked like an Englishman and he began to roll his *r*'s and talk a little through his nose like a farmer I . . . And it's grown on him. He's begun really to be that thing, really to feel that way, really to be a good middle-class moral American! Even with me! Even when we're alone! It was all right to give away our cellar when he came out for prohibition, but to scold me now every time I drink or smoke! And with real moral indignation! Why, to-night, as I've had this drink of gin, I'll scarcely dare kiss him! Before this last campaign he asked me please to stop rouging my lips. I lost him votes appearing rouged on his platforms! Why, I've rouged my lips since I was fifteen! I have to with my hair, I feel naked without it. But you see I haven't any on. And he made me stop wearing Poiret clothes. Too French! And Poiret's made my clothes since mother took me over when I was sixteen! And I've stopped! Look at this rag! Roediger's! Costume for Mrs. Lincoln! Look at that hat!" She pointed to the battered black straw on the editorial table, and suddenly she drooped forward and supported herself on the back of a chair. "Oh, I don't really care about the things like that," she said. "I wouldn't really care if he hadn't started on the children. But when he sent the boys to high school instead of to St. Jude's I—I . . . Damn it, I won't be the mother of—"

"Easy, Eleanor."

"I'm sorry, was I shouting? You do understand now? Don't you, John? If he goes on . . . You see I don't love this new Wayne. I never could have loved him. I can't live with him. I won't live with him. But I love my Wayne. Yes, I still love him and I'll always love him if I can get him back. But if he goes on being the public's little hero instead of my Wayne I'll . . . I'll leave him."

"Oh, you can't do that, Eleanor."

"I will. And it won't be easy, not even for him. Even if he does scold me and try to change me, he loves me. He's never looked at another woman. And he loves the children and if I left him, I'd take them."

"You couldn't."

"Watch me. We'd just go off next month for a winter in Italy and never come back."

A silence.

"Why don't you tell him frankly that you'll leave him unless he drops being—"

"He'd just press a martyr's crown of thorns on his brow and say he was living up to his best ideals and couldn't change, and he'd put a guard on the children."

"I think you're not fair to him, Eleanor. Why don't you have a good knock-down-drag-out fight?"

"Fight! Do you think I haven't tried to fight? He won't fight. He just becomes noble and suffering and silent: his new Lincolnian character at its damndest! No. If he wins to-night, he's lost. He'll be a success, a fine American success, probably President some day. And he'll be a worm. If he loses, I'll take him abroad next week, take him to some place strange or maybe just exciting, like Paris now. I can. And I can get him back. I'm stronger than he is. But I'm not stronger than the whole damned United States!"

"Easy, darling."

"Was I shouting again? Sorry. Give me another drink."

A band was approaching on Purchase Street, trombones blaring, "Hail, the Conquering Hero Comes." Red fire blazed. Cheers crashed in jubilant crescendos. John and Eleanor looked at each other. "There he is," she said. "Oh, if he's only lost!"

The band halted beneath John's windows. The cheers rose to a roar. There was a rush of feet in the hall and Wayne strode in, followed by a dozen Irish ward leaders. "What's the latest, John?" he smiled, tossing his broad-brimmed black hat on the editorial table.

"Rather bad. Looks as if there'd be a hundred thousand against you in the city."

Wayne's pale cheeks grew a trifle paler, but he rubbed his hands together and smiled.

"About what I expected. Our turn will come when the plain people from the farms and mines begin to be heard from. Is there anything yet from upstate? Franklin County? Or Lafayette?"

"Nothing," said John.

"Well, boys, we'll have to wait," Wayne smiled at his followers. "Make yourselves comfortable. And if we haven't won to-day, we'll begin our fight for honest government again to-morrow." He was talking through his teeth and shaking his black mane gallantly. "Can I have a glass of water, John?"

They waited: Eleanor, Wayne, John, and the dozen stub-fingered ward leaders smoking cigars. With each bulletin the majority against Wayne grew. The ward leaders began to find reasons to escape from the room: "So long, chief, be back a little later. Have to phone the wife." "So long, chief, back soon, just want to run up to Headquarters." "Wait till we begin to hear from upstate, chief." The crowd outside the *Times* building melted away. A band was blaring far up Purchase Street in front of the headquarters of Wayne's opponent. There was no one left in the office but John and Eleanor and Wayne. He was standing by a Cross Street window looking into the night, hands clasped behind him: Lincoln in the White House awaiting news from the Wilderness.

Eleanor flung open the Purchase Street windows and let out the clouds of cigar smoke. Her eyes met John's and she smiled. A boy entered with a bulletin.

"Here's Lafayette at last!" said John. Wayne wheeled. "And it's seven thousand against you, Wayne."

"Against me! It can't be! I was expecting that much or more in my favor!"

"Here it is." John handed him the bulletin.

Wayne looked at it and smiled, a crooked, hurt smile. "Well, Wayne Sinclair's goose is certainly cooked," he said. "Done to a turn and served with fried apples and a bottle of burgundy."

"Wayne dear, don't care!" Eleanor took his face in her hands. "Don't mind! I'm going to take you away tomorrow. We're going abroad and we're going to be happier than we've ever been before." She kissed him again and again and again. "You will go, won't you, and leave politics alone?"

"I don't have to leave politics, I guess," said Wayne. "Politics seem to have left me."

"Sweetheart!" She was clinging to him, her head on his shoulder and he was kissing her hair. There was a knock. MacCallum burst in, brandishing a handful of papers.

"Sorry, Mr. Corsey," he said. "That last bulletin was a mistake. Figures reversed. Lafayette's given Mr. Sinclair seven thousand and fifty majority! Congratulations, sir! If you keep that up, you're elected! And you've kept it up in Jefferson County. Here's the bulletin. Six thousand, seven hundred and three majority for you! And better than all: nine thousand in Franklin!"

Eleanor had fallen from Wayne's shoulder and was standing behind him, face bloodless, eyes staring. A feeble cheer rose in Purchase Street. The Lafayette result was shining on a screen across the street. Buck Nolan, fourth ward leader, burst in: "We're going to win, Governor!" He threw his dead cigar into a corner and slapped Wayne's kidneys.

"We mustn't be too confident," said Wayne. "One gallon doesn't fill the gas tank."

"Good old Wayne!"

One by one the other cigars rushed jubilantly back. Cheers rose again in the street, gaining in volume with each bulletin flashed on the screen. The blare of trombones and the crash of drums sounded above the cheers.

A parade was coming down Purchase Street. Closer and closer it came, and with it the roar of a marching crowd:

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here! What the hell do we care! What the hell do we care! Hail, hail, the gang's all here! What the hell do we care now!" "Sinclair! Sinclair! Sinclair! Speech! Speech! Speech!"

The telephone on John's desk buzzed. He answered. Then he looked up and said:

"Smith's headquarters admit Sinclair's election."

"Yeaaaaa! Hurrah! Congratulations, Governor!" Ten hands were struggling to be the first to grasp Wayne's. "Governor! Governor!"

"Speech! Speech! Speech! Sinclair! We want Sinclair!" The crowd outside was roaring.

"You'd better go out and give them a word, Governor," grinned Buck Nolan. "They'll be tearing down Mr. Corsey's building if you don't!"

Wayne stepped to the window and crawled through it to the narrow balcony which hung over Purchase Street. A crash of drums and a roar of cheers. He raised a hand and stilled the tumult.

"My friends and fellow citizens," his voice rang. "In this hour of victory I beg you to be conscious not of our triumph but of our responsibilities. We have won a great battle for law and order and civic righteousness, but ahead of us are many battles which we must enter with strong hearts and willing hands if we are to make this fair land of ours a fit abiding place for our children. This victory, my fellow citizens, is no more my victory than it is the victory of every one of you, of every one of you who supports the principles of ordered freedom that our forefathers gave their lives to establish. I for my part will undertake the responsibilities of the great office which you have this day entrusted to me, not with any emotion of jubilation but in humbleness of spirit, deeply conscious of the duties it entails and of the crushing burden that . . ."

There was a choking sound by the door of John's

office. He turned. Eleanor was stuffing her handkerchief into her mouth and creeping out the door.



Mildred, violently erect in the yellow music room, was reading a letter and John was leaning over her shoulder devouring the same letter.

Dear Mother:

I'm writing you this at 4 A.M. because in the curious place I'm in, what with the fleas and the nightingales, I haven't slept a wink. I suppose you'll want to know how I happened to get the D.S.O. Of course it was a mistake. I should have been court-martialed, but old Squiggs didn't know how it happened and recommended me in his sweet ignorance. I had orders to take up a new position with a few men, Hardy and Ford having gone West the day before, but there was a nice sunrise coming above a low-hanging mist and I got absent-minded wondering if the chestnut blight had killed the trees at Kingsale and that sort of thing, and the first thing I knew there was a Boche officer about two yards in front of me. We both fired, but he was as scared as I was, I guess, and we both missed and he bolted. Well, what I'd done was to go on past the position I was to take up, right into the stubs of a little village which the Boche were still holding. There wasn't anything to do but go on, so we went on and after a bit of fighting the Boche ran, and there we were in the village and as the sun was up and the mist had lifted and there wasn't any way to get out of it we had to stay. The Boche started strafing us, but made rotten practice. We lost a few men, but when they came on to throw us out we spanked them properly. Our line came up that night. I told old Squiggs he ought to court-martial me, but he wouldn't believe how it happened. That's all there was to it.

What's Leather going to do with Kingsale? I think Uncle Theodore is a slob to have sold it. And to Leather! It would be different if one of our friends had it; at least we could visit. Never mind. Some day I'll marry the daughter of a Pittsburgh millionaire in the approved English fashion and buy it back. Incidentally, I met young Ted the other day, just back from Blighty looking very fit. He's got a cushy job with the brass hats.

I'm very fit and bored. Write me *gossip*: All the *dirt* about all our friends. Who's Uncle Bobby's latest? And when in the name of Pete is the United States coming in?

Best love to yourself and father from your fleabitten son
RUSH.

They looked at each other, locked in a trembling, terrified pride.



Newsboys were shouting through the still streets of Washington: "Extra! Wilson breaks with Germany! Extra! Bernstorff sent home! Extra! President's speech! Extra!"

John entered the White House offices and asked to see the President.

"Did you like his speech?" asked the secretary.

"It was wonderful," said John. "I'd like to tell him so."

"I guess he'll see you then," said the secretary, and disappeared. A minute later he returned and held open a door. "Come in, Mr. Corsey."

The President was standing by his desk. John took his hand.

"I just want to tell you, Mr. President, that to-day you said the things which every one in the world who cares about the future of humanity has been waiting for you to say. And you said them supremely well. The *Times* has criticized you in the past. I'm sorry. You made me understand to-day why you haven't gone in before, and I promise you that henceforth we'll support you to the limit. You've made yourself the leader of every one in the world who wants real peace."

"Thank you, Mr. Corsey. You don't know how hard it's been. How hard it is! Did you see those Congressmen and Senators an hour ago? Applauding every wretched little warlike word I had to speak, ignoring all the things for which I really care. The mean-spirited fools! They can't understand, they'll never understand that I hate this war, that I hate all war, and the only

thing I care about in life is the peace I'm going to make at the end of it." There were tears in the President's eyes. He was still holding John's hand. He gave it a final pressure and turned his head away.

"God bless you, sir," said John. "You've made yourself the leader that mankind's been waiting for."



"Then you won't mind if I call again some day?" John, in the uniform of a major of the Intelligence Service, bent formally over Mrs. Fitzgerald's hand and made a slight kissing sound three inches above her fingers.

"Why should I?" she smiled. She was stretched on a low divan, relaxed as her pale green tea gown.

"You're amazing!" John lingered. "You've been in Washington just three months and already you're as at home as in London. You have every one in town worth knowing sitting at your feet. Literally!" he laughed. "I never saw a more comic sight than the other afternoon when the Italian Ambassador and the French High Commissioner and all the Belgians and half the Cabinet were propped against one another on the floor and General Bluck tried to step over them to shake your hand. How on earth do you do it? And here?" He waved a hand at the little room which contained only a red Chinese lacquer chest, two gros-point fauteuils and a pile of varicolored cushions.

"Make them uncomfortable, obviously," she smiled; "beyond that—plenty of Gordon gin and the whole menagerie of lions at once without spectators. So long as each one feels he's supporting the shoulder of some one more important than himself he's perfectly happy. The foreigners think the Cabinet's important, the Cabinet's afraid of the Senators and the Senators are awed by any kind of a foreign officer or diplomatist. I put them all together on the floor and they're all as happy as pork-packers' wives at a royal garden party."

"Thanks for the tip," John smiled. "I really must go

now, but I'll prove to you some day that you're wrong about Wilson."

"I hope you do." She looked down at her long pink fingernails.

"He's a great man," said John. "I had a minute with him once that—"

"I know," she looked up; "probably one of those minutes when he's so intoxicated by the greatness of his own heart that the aroma of noble emotion he exhales makes every one near him drunk with admiration."

"That's vicious, just vicious!" John flushed. "And if you haven't faith in Wilson, in whom pray have you faith? Lloyd George? Bonar Law? Balfour? Do you think they'll make a decent peace!"

"Unhappily I've seen them too often. Balfour knows but doesn't care, Bonar Law cares but doesn't know, and Lloyd George neither knows nor cares."

He laughed. "Then what do you think will come out of the war?"

"The next war. As it was at Utrecht, so was it at Vienna and so it will be world without end."

"You'll see. Wilson will—"

"Oh, John Corsey, don't talk to me about Wilson again! You're blind. The whole of Washington's blind except that old elephant Penrose and that old cat Lodge. Wilson's a middle-class Southerner with a colossal vocabulary and an even more colossal inferiority complex. He can't endure near him any one who insists on either mental or moral equality. He surrounds himself with Tumultys and Creels. Therefore he knows nothing. And his entire personal acquaintance with Europe consists of a two weeks' bicycle trip in the English lakes. He makes beautiful speeches, but he makes them out of the notes prepared for him by one old man who knows Europe and several young men who know Europe. Poor Wilson doesn't even understand the implications of the words they tell him to use. If the Allies win—"

"Which they will now that we're in it," said John.

"I suppose so. I hear, by the way, that the first American planes are to be shipped this week."

"No. Just between ourselves," said John, "there's another breakdown in the ignition. We'll send no planes for another four months at least. But please don't repeat that."

"Have you a cigarette and a match?" she asked. "Light it for me, will you? And let's stop talking war. So much of it bores one, don't you find?"

"I'd rather talk about ourselves at any time." He took the lighted cigarette from his lips, sat on the divan, and passed it to her. She inhaled and blew a long cloud toward the ceiling. He reached for her hand. Her fingers were five white protests.

"Oh, no, John! And you are John and I'm Edith. It's rather silly, isn't it, to have started again as Mr. Corsey and Mrs. Fitzgerald. If a man and a woman have almost run away with each other for life it's usually considered *de rigueur*, isn't it, that they should know each other's first names?" she smiled. "And we did escape running away together—well, shall I say just by a Plitt's breadth?"

"I'm sorry you can smile about it," said John. "I can't. I'm too horribly sorry and ashamed. I—"

"Dear infant!" She patted his knee.

"Edith!" He caught her hand. "I want you. I want you now!"

She detached her fingers with abrupt little mechanical movements of the joints.

"Why not?" he pleaded. "You wanted me then. You know you wanted me. It was my fault that— You know you want me now!"

"Incredibly, I don't," she smiled.

"Don't laugh at me, Edith."

"*M. me pour ne pas pleurer?*" she said.

"Then you do care!"

"Not that way. That's what's so sad," she said.

"But if you cared that way once, you can again—you will again."

"Not I," she said. "Oh, John dear, it is the saddest thing about life, isn't it? To care and then not really care. And never to have caught one minute. There's no use trying to revive it. Afterward it's like waves chasing each other. When one's at the crest the other's in the trough. They never meet."

"But they can meet."

"Once, if they have luck. Not twice. It's like this winter coming over: there was a storm and the waves were being driven so crazily that from time to time one would overtake another, they'd rise together, and something tremendous would happen; they'd smash the ship like a twenty-inch shell and leave her quivering. But most of the waves would never quite rise together. They'd just go on chasing each other toward the horizon. They're like a love that goes by. When one wants again the other doesn't. You're at the break perhaps. I'm in the trough."

"But, Edith, I need you so!"

"I'm sorry," she said, "I don't need you. Not that way. And even if I wanted you, I'd not go with you now. You've a son at the front and your wife must be—"

"I haven't been near her for a year. I swear to you! I haven't been near any one."

"I'm sorry," she said, "but it makes no difference."

"And what has a son at the front to do with us? He'd never know. Mildred would never know."

"Oh!" she said. "You want a little secret affair now, do you? Like Plitt's."

"Don't, Edith."

"Sorry. I suppose the manner of your going that day has festered a bit in me. Well, if it has, it's lanced now. I do love you—quietly. Now go away, dear John: there's a light in the house opposite and the menagerie will be arriving in a minute."

"Go away to what? There's only one place I want to be!"

"You can be here. As often as you like, only—only—let's say as my little brother might come, my very

young little brother. You are rather like a little boy, you know, John, a very eager, good, religious little boy. I'd like to have known you when you were ten."

The doorbell rang.

"Good-bye." John rose. Her eyes which were his eyes gazed at him a moment: then she sprang up and kissed him, on the mouth. He stood and looked at her. A ponderous step was mounting the stair. The bulk of General Bluck filled the doorway. He nodded grimly toward John, his heavy face sullen as a hungry baby's.

"Hello, Blucky!" called Mrs. Fitzgerald. "Been raking the British Ambassador over the coals or stomping on the President?"

General Bluck beamed.

John went out.



He was standing at the window of his room in a rented house on the Sixteenth Street hill, looking across the roofs of Washington at the dome of the Capitol. There was a small box in his hands. He unwrapped the box and took from it a red morocco ring case. In the case was a square diamond. He turned the stone in the morning sunlight and smiled as blue lights flashed from its depths. Then he walked to Mildred's room. She was in bed, propped on pillows, reading the *Washington Post*.

"Horrible! Isn't it?" she looked up, her pale face drawn. "Ludendorff has smashed—"

"Pretty bad," said John, "but I don't want to think about that to-day, do you?" He took her hand and kissed her finger-tips.

"What else is there to think about?" She turned back to the *Post*.

"Well, I was thinking that perhaps I'd found something that would please you." He handed her the ring case.

"John! You darling! It's exquisite! But why did you do it? Just now when we have so many expenses and—"

"Well, it occurred to me that just now happened to be our twentieth wedding anniversary."

"Oh, John, I'm so sorry! I forgot. I forgot completely! I'm so ashamed." She reached up and took his face in her hands and kissed him. "Now what can I get for you?"

"Nothing. Nothing, please," he said.

"But I must give you something. Isn't there anything you want?"

"Not a thing."

"Dear! Please?"

"Well, if you really want to do something for me you might give me a promise."

"What sort of a promise?"

"Oh, not the kind I used to ask for," he smiled. "Something much easier. Just tell me you'll drop one or two people I don't like."

"What people?"

"Well, first the array of fruit vendors you have here in the afternoons."

"Whom do you mean? The Italians?"

"Plus the French, the Russians, and the Greeks. They all have the morals of rabbits and honestly, Mildred, when I come home in the evenings now, I feel as if I were intruding. There's always some one who looks at me as if I'd unjustifiably interrupted a pleasant tête-à-tête. There's not one of your friends who treats me as a friend. It's as if they were all your lovers, or expected to be, and they treat me as if—"

"You know that's not true, John!"

"You know you flirt with them."

"What if I do? Anybody but you would understand flirting. Everybody in the diplomatic crowd always flirts. They've nothing else to do most of the time. It doesn't mean anything. And I don't see why I can't have my own friends without your objecting. I don't ask you where you go or whom you see. They come here because they like to hear me play and I give them tea and cocktails. What else have I to do? You wouldn't let me go back to the hospital. You wouldn't let me go over with Tom Athyn's

unit. You can't expect me to sit here alone all day, never seeing any one."

"I don't expect you to do that, but I do expect you to act with a certain dignity; and your relationship with the fruit vendors is as undignified as your going to prize fights with Milligan."

"What if I do? Every one goes to prize fights now. They're all for charity."

"I don't care what they're for. A prize fight's not a decent entertainment for a lady."

"John, you're eighteenth-century."

"Perhaps, but you'll please cut it out. Do you really enjoy watching two thugs knock each other senseless?"

"Of course I enjoy it, or I wouldn't go. And you're just a snob to object to George Milligan. After all, my dear, the world does move and he's a colonel in the Ordnance Department and a business man with a big future before him. You'll just have to forget what he was when you knew him first. He goes everywhere in Washington."

"What on earth do you like about him?"

"I like him. That's all. That's enough, isn't it? You liked him once."

"I rather like him still, but in the office and not as your cavalier."

She flushed. "He's not my cavalier!"

"I didn't say *servente*."

"No; but you thought it! Here! Take your ring!" She wrenched at her finger.

There was a knock on the door and a maid entered with a box of flowers.

"Put it on the chaise longue," said Mildred.

"I didn't send it. You'd better open it," said John. He took the box of flowers and pulled off the strings and stood watching her belligerently as she drew back the oiled paper and searched for the card. There were roses and jonquils and early lilacs and mignonette. Her fingers found the envelope.

"It's addressed to Mr. and Mrs. Corsey, you'll observe," she sneered. Then she gave a little startled cry: "Why, it's Rush's writing!" She tore open the envelope and they bent over the card together and read:

Because I'm glad you did it.

RUSH.

They stared at the card, and suddenly Mildred's hands covered her eyes and John's left hand flew up to his mouth.



"Let's join the ladies." John rose from a deep leather chair in the library of the house on Sixteenth Street and stood by the door to the drawing-room waiting for his guests to pass. General Bluck and the Vicomte de Ronsard went out together. Abelard of the War Trade Board followed with Bekiroff of the new Russian Embassy. Colonel Pike lingered.

"If you don't mind, Corsey, there's something I'd like to say to you before we go in." The colonel's thin brows met over his small brown eyes.

"Fire away, colonel," said John.

"It's about one of your guests," said the colonel. "Mrs. Fitzgerald. I hope in the future you'll see as little of her as possible. And I hope I may assume that a word to the wise . . ." He raised his brows.

"You certainly may not!" A flush rose to John's forehead. "And since you're in my house and speaking about one of my guests I take it that you mean to speak not as my superior officer but as my social acquaintance. And I'll ask you to explain yourself at once. What the devil do you mean to insinuate?"

"Nothing whatever about you but—"

"What about Mrs. Fitzgerald?"

"I've been having her watched and—"

"By God, colonel, you're mad! You're getting a spy mania! Mrs. Fitzgerald is—"

"Not so loud, Corsey."

"Sorry, but you make me want to throw you out the window. That woman a spy!"

"To-morrow in the office I'll show you the reports. I didn't want to drag you into the case. I merely wished to warn you as a friend and as your superior officer. There's likely to be an ugly scandal and I don't want any of my men in it. You call on Mrs. Fitzgerald frequently. Please see to it for your own good that you never give her either military or political information."

"Information! She has more information about every end of the war than any man or woman in Washington! All the British and French and Italians are there every day, and as for Abelard and Bluck! They're so mad about her that there's nothing they don't tell her, and between them they've every military secret we possess."

"That's just it," said Colonel Pike. "She pumps them. And to do it better she's begun a love affair with Bluck."

"I don't believe you, sir. I think that's a damned lie. And even if it's true, how does it concern you? You're chief of an Intelligence Service, not of a morals squad!"

"Major Corsey, there are limits to—"

"Not in my house when you insult a friend who—"

"When you reach the office to-morrow, will you report to me at once, major. I'll put you on the case."

"I hope you do. I'll show you in an hour what that woman is!"

"Shall we join the ladies?" said Pike.

"Go in. I'll follow you when I'm a bit cooler."

Pike walked to the drawing-room. John flung open the French windows of the library and stood looking over Washington. Searchlights playing on the Washington Monument had turned it to a silver lance. To the east the lighted dome of the Capitol floated like a mammoth rising moon. Mildred began to play a shimmering translucency of Debussy's. "I did tell her about the planes," John said, and stood a long time looking into the night. A maid spoke behind him. He turned, startled. "A cable, Mr.

Corsey." "Thanks." He took the envelope absent-mindedly and turned back to the window. Above the dome of the Capitol there were tranquil stars. "It's impossible. Pike's an ass!" He closed the window, ran a finger carelessly under the flap of the envelope, and opened it.

John Corsey, 16 Street, Washington.
Amiens.

Horribly sorry dear dear John. Cushing and I got to him and did everything humanly possible but he never regained consciousness. No suffering at the end. Know what it means to you and cant express sympathy I feel. Best love.

THOMAS ATHYN.

He stared at the cable. "Oh, no; oh, no!" he whispered.

His hands dropped. The bit of paper fell to the floor. He stood looking at it, legs wide apart, arms hanging, mouth open. "No. No!" he pleaded. Then he sprang at the paper and read it again.

A burst of laughter from the drawing-room cut him like a whip on the face. Mildred was striking chords on the piano. Bekiroff began to sing "Stenki Razin."

"O God, don't, don't, *don't* let it be true!" He clasped his right hand over his mouth.

The music stopped. "Bravo! Encore! Encore!" Chatter.

"John dear, where are you?" Mildred was calling.

"Coming, coming!" He thrust the cable into his trousers pocket and straightened his shoulders, but as he passed the doorway he clung to the portières to steady himself.

"Shall we have a rubber of bridge?" Mildred was suggesting. "We can make three tables. Get the cards, John."

"Sorry, Mrs. Corsey, I never break the ten-o'clock rule," General Bluck heaved ponderously from his seat beside Mrs. Fitzgerald, "and it will be ten in fifteen minutes. Have to keep fit, you know, too much depends on it. And I have to be up to do the daily dozen with Walter Camp and the rest." He chuckled as if he had said something witty and every one laughed politely.

"Did I tell you what the old Bakhmeteff said to me about the new Bakhmeteff?" Mrs. Fitzgerald called across the room to Vicomtesse de Ronsard. "I asked what relation they were and Bakhmeteff said, 'My dear Mrs. Fitzgerald, the members of his family bear precisely the same relationship to the members of my family that Booker T. Washington bears to George Washington.'"

A roar of laughter.

There was a vacant place on the upholstered sofa beside Mrs. Bluck. John dropped into it.

"I don't like clever people, do you, Mr. Corsey?" the general's wife whispered acidly. "And no one ought to speak that way of that dear Mr. Bakhmeteff."

"Yes," said John.

"Although I do think his government was dreadful! Think of allowing themselves to be overthrown by those Bolsheviks! I hope you're in favor of intervention, sending troops and all."

"Yes," said John.

"What's the latest about intervention?" Mrs. Bland Orpington addressed the room. She had owned the largest house in Washington for thirty years and was permitted to address the room.

"Philippe knows." The Vicomtesse de Ronsard smiled largely at her ratty little husband. "He was with Bergson at the White House."

"You'll intervene, I think." Ronsard showed his nibbling teeth. "Bergson was magnificent! 'Mr. President,' he said, 'a thousand years ago when men were in need of moral guidance they turned to Rome; to-day they turn to the White House.' The President almost wept. You'll intervene, I think," he giggled.

"It will be a great error if you do," said Bekiroff. "You'll only rally the whole country to support the Bolsheviks. And they are bound to fall. Our latest information—"

"Oh, Bekiroff, don't!" scoffed Mrs. Fitzgerald. "You and Bakhmeteff the second assured us all at the beginning

that they couldn't last two weeks. Better than assured, you proved it. Since then you've been as obvious as the *New York Times*, which has killed Lenin six times and Trotsky ten and announced seventeen falls at least. Every time there's a chance of recognition you have them fall. You're too transparent!"

"For my part, I hope we intervene, and at once," thundered General Bluck. "Those fellows will run like rabbits. I don't wish to insult your countrymen, Bekiroff, but I'd like to see them get a trouncing. When they pulled out of the war, they lengthened it by at least three years. They've cost us every American life that we've lost or will lose."

"So you want to lose more intervening," said Bekiroff.

"Not at all," Abelard's high voice bleated. "We want to show them that treaties are sacred and debts and religion. They've all become atheists, and I'm for blockading them and starving them and killing them till they return to their senses and become decent Christians again."

"Will you excuse me a moment, Mrs. Bluck?" said John, and left the room. He stood swaying on the landing above the staircase. Then he walked down the stairs very slowly, his left hand gripping the banister. The lights in the dining room were out. He groped through the darkness to the sideboard. His hand reached for the whisky decanter but his head fell forward suddenly to his arm, and he stood in the darkness without moving till there was laughter on the stairs. He straightened slowly, twisted his mouth to a smile, and walked to the hall.

"Good night, Mr. Corsey. Such a pleasant evening, such good talk always at your house!" beamed Mrs. Orpington.

"Good night, major. Thanks, great pleasure." General and Mrs. Bluck departed.

"Jolly dinner, Corsey. Hope you'll dine soon with me," baaed Abelard.

"Good night, major," Pike bowed.

"*A bientôt*," the Ronsards left.

"Good night, dear John." Edith Fitzgerald pressed his hand.

He walked up the stairs. Mildred was leaning over the banister. "Tired, dear?" she called. "You're walking so slowly."

"Yes," he said.

"Edith Fitzgerald just said the cleverest thing about the Ronsards," Mildred chuckled. "She said that their marriage was a perfect equation: she didn't love him but did want to marry him, and he did love her but didn't want to marry her. Isn't it a perfect description!"

"Yes. Come in here a moment, will you, Mildred?" He walked past her to the drawing-room. "And sit down, will you, please?" He closed the double door behind her.

"What's happened? What is it, John?" She came toward him, hands raised.

"I . . . I . . ." His mouth hung open, but only a choke came out of his throat. He could not endure her eyes, his chin bent down to his left shoulder.

"John! What is it!"

His left hand fumbled frantically in his pocket. He drew out the cable and held it crumpled and shaking in his clenched fist.

She made no sound. He looked at her. She was straight and white as a shaft of stone, but as he looked she became straighter and whiter, incredibly erect, her chin going higher and higher, her clenched hands stiff at her sides. Her head went slowly up and back, the muscles of her throat straining to breaking. She fell backward.

The maid knocked on the door of the drawing-room. "Shall I put out the lights, madam?"

"Oh, go away!" John cried.

When the maid came down in the morning, the lights were still burning. Softly she opened the door of the drawing-room an inch. Mr. and Mrs. Corsey were sitting on

the upholstered sofa, side by side, his right hand clasping her left in a rigid, fixed embrace, and they were looking straight before them, stiff and blind as two stone statues.



"I don't ask you to do this, Corsey," said Colonel Pike. "After what's happened I'd prefer—"

"I ask you to let me do it," said John. "If that woman is a spy, she's one of the persons who killed him."

They were standing in a dark room at the rear of a house whose yard adjoined the yard of Mrs. Fitzgerald's house. It was a bare room with closed shutters and no furniture except two tables by the wall and a phonograph recorder in the center of the floor. Above the tables the snout of an amplifier protruded from the wall. Beneath it sat two soldiers, telephone receivers attached to their ears, pencils and notebooks on the tables before them. Two soldiers stood by the recorder.

"There's one thing I can't understand," said John. "Mrs. Fitzgerald was born American, she married a British officer, nearly all her friends are English or American. What motive can she have to be a traitor?"

"The usual motive."

"What?"

"Money."

"But she has an independent income."

"She hasn't."

"That Turk."

"We investigated that story. She was his mistress. When he died she had a few jewels he'd given her. That's all. He was rich; but his property was all in land and entailed with remainder to the Efka." "

"What's that?"

"The Turkish Ministry of Pious Foundations. His property was his for life and his family's after; and when the family expires, it goes to provide funds to send poor pilgrims to Mecca. He couldn't sell or give away one yard of it. He couldn't, therefore, have left her anything but

cash on hand, and there's no record he did that or that he had any cash on hand. But she's been living well ever since. She at once became fashionable in London. A little later, June 12th, 1908, to be exact, her London bank account suddenly was increased by forty thousand pounds. That's what she's lived on. And the money was paid in notes, not by check, in order that there might be no trace of its source."

"Even if you've established that, you haven't established anything, unless you can prove she transmits the information she gets to Germany."

"She has a maid," said Pike, "a Dutch maid. Curious in the first place. Fashionable women have French or English maids, not Dutch."

"I know the maid; she's been with Mrs. Fitzgerald for years. Have you ever caught Mrs. Fitzgerald giving her information?"

"No; but Mrs. Fitzgerald drives her own car and the maid calls every evening to accompany her home from any house at which she's dining. Why? She's not a girl of sixteen. It's because she knows dictaphones can't be put in an automobile. That's where they talk."

"That's a guess, not proof."

"It's proof. We know this about the maid: she has a husband, a steward on the *New Amsterdam*, and every time the ship is in New York he comes down here to see his wife and they go to walk in Rock Creek Park; but they don't live together. We've watched them day and night. They just talk and talk and talk. But they don't make love. They don't even kiss. Do you think a steward, on a steward's wages, pays the fare from New York to Washington and back for the pleasure of walking one afternoon with his wife in Rock Creek Park?"

"He might," said John.

"Well, we've watched him in Rotterdam. He has a friend, a great friend, a Dutchman who is valet to the German consul. They too take frequent walks."

"She's coming in now, sir." A soldier rose suddenly and

offered the receiver which was on his head to John. He put it on and sat down.

Edith Fitzgerald's voice came into his ears: "We must change the laundry, Anna; they've torn my underclothes to bits. Ouch! The hook's caught in my hair. There. Now my mauve tea gown. And where on earth have you put the lip sticks?"

"Here, madam."

"You would! What a place!"

Silence.

"Thank you, Anna, that's all. Sleep well."

"Thank you, madam. Good night."

Silence.

"Over there, over there," Mrs. Fitzgerald began to hum.

Silence.

John fumbled at his pockets, found a cigarette, struck a match. His trembling fingers stabbed twice at the end of the cigarette before it caught fire.

A sound. Then Mrs. Fitzgerald's voice: "Blucky darling! I thought you were never coming."

"Dear little girl!" A kiss. "One more!" General Bluck's voice was infantile.

"Not another till you explain what's kept you so late. I hurried home sure you'd be here waiting. Poor Abelard wanted to follow me. I shook him off by pleading a violent headache. If you see him to-morrow, remember you've heard I've been ill."

"Nobody will believe that, ducky, when you look the way you do. You *are* beautiful!"

"No. Not another till you explain what's been keeping you."

"Something big, something tremendous, the biggest thing we've taken on yet."

"Oh, Blucky, how exciting!"

"I'm afraid I'll have to be at the Department every night now. I've got to go back in an hour."

"That's disgusting! What's up?"

"We're going to pinch out the St. Mihiel salient. All by ourselves. No French or British. The whole operation on our own hook! Of course it's an absolute secret. You mustn't breathe a word to any one."

"Blucky, do I usually?"

"No, darling, I must say you're the soul of discretion. But this is such a big operation and we'll lose like hell if the Germans get wind of it. And we want to show the French and British a thing or two. They've always let things slip. You remember Nivelles's offensive at the Chemin des Dames. We don't want a slaughter like that."

"I should hope not. It is fearfully exciting though, isn't it? I'll not sleep till it's happened. When's it coming off?"

"Four weeks from to-morrow."

"And you'll be busy at the Department every night till then! I hate it!"

"Duty is duty, dear. A soldier can't pick and choose."

"And you have to go back to-night?"

"I'm sorry."

"And you're standing there now all strapped up in a Sam Browne belt. Don't you think my arms might be nicer?"

"Sweetheart!"

A kiss.

"I'll not be a minute, dear."

"No. To-night I'll ungird you myself." A pause. "Thus did . . . Andromache . . . remove . . . the arms . . . of Hector. . . . No. Not your shoes! You can jolly well take them off yourself."

A rumbling laugh. A shoe thumping. Another shoe thumping.

"Oh, Blucky, your chest's so strong and your arms—"

"Strong enough to carry my little wickedness to bed."

"If you can catch her."

Bare feet running. A scuffle.

"You sweet demon!"

"Not so tight, Blucky! You hurt!"

Sounds.

John wrenched the receivers from his ears and stood up. The amplifier was belching sounds at the horn of the recorder.

"Colonel, please!" John lurched to the door, dropped into a chair in the adjoining room and sat, his head in his hands. Then he got up and began to pace the room. Colonel Pike was grinning.

"Now we've got to act quickly," John glowered down at him. "She's got to have her mouth stopped to-night before she can even see her maid. She ought to be shot! I ought to go over to her house and shoot her."

"That would be very satisfactory if it weren't that the testimony at your trial would ruin Bluck and Abelard and half the Cabinet and most of the Ambassadors. And you'd be jailed if you weren't hanged," said Colonel Pike.

"What do I care! She's a criminal! The worst sort of a criminal! If she transmits that information it means thousands of our—" He choked and shook his head like a dog coming out of water.

"The important thing," said Pike, "is to get hold of her at once, before she can see the maid. I don't want to arrest her: that would make the same scandal. You know her pretty well. Do you think you could go over there and see to it that she doesn't talk with the maid?"

"Will you give me carte-blanche to say and do what I like? If you will, I'll make her confess."

"Go ahead. As soon as the stenographers have transcribed the notes I'm going over to the White House: this business to-night is too damned serious. Lord knows what will come out of it, but it's up to you and me to make sure she has no chance to communicate."

"I'll see to that," said John. "I'll go now."

"And interrupt the general," Pike grinned. "Not till he's left. Sit down."

They waited in silence.

The door opened. "General Bluck's gone, sir," said the stenographer. John walked out.

Three times he rang at Mrs. Fitzgerald's door before there was an answer. Then a window opened and her voice called, "Who's there?"

"John Corsey."

"Oh, dear John! Just a moment!"

A silence. The rattle of a chain and a key turning. The door opened. She was dressed in a mauve tea gown.

"Dear, dear little brother!" She extended a hand to draw him in.

"Please don't!" He pushed past her.

"What's the matter, John?"

"Would you mind following me to the kitchen?"

"The kitchen!"

"Yes."

"John dear, you're not yourself. Come upstairs."

He did not answer but walked through the dining-room and the pantry to the kitchen.

"Where's the light?"

"Here." She turned the switch and stood looking at him, eyes puckered with tenderness. "John dear, I'll sit in the cellar if you want, but do please come upstairs."

"No," he said. "I want to talk with you frankly. Therefore, I'd like to talk in a room where there are no dictaphones."

"Dictaphones!" There was suddenly no color in her face. Her freshly rouged lips were red weals.

"Yes," he said. "You're caught."

Her chest rose with a great breath and blood filled her cheeks and forehead.

"You've had dictaphones in my house?"

"In every room of it, and we have the confession of your maid's husband. You might as well confess. You ought to be shot, but if you'll tell the truth now I'll do my best for you."

"John dear," her hand reached toward his arm, "you've suffered too much. Can't you understand? I'm Edith Fitzgerald and you're my little brother, and I'm going to take

care of you." She moved toward him, hands raised to take his hands.

"My God, how you can act!" He backed away from her. "But it's no use, Edith, we know all about you."

"Know what, dear?"

"That you're a spy!" He tried to look through her eyes into her mind.

"John dear, do come upstairs and let me give you a whisky and soda."

"Edith, you're a pretty cool proposition; but you won't be so cool in the morning when you're arrested."

She looked at him a long time, questioning, and gradually her eyes widened.

"You're not serious, are you?"

"To-night I'll ungird you myself. Thus did Andromache—"

"You swine! You filthy swine!" She struck at his face. He caught her wrists and held her.

"You might as well confess," he said. "You see, you might as well confess."

"Let go—you're hurting me!" She writhed and he released her. She stared at him, her eyes ablaze with hatred. "Now sit down on that chair, and I'll sit here and you'll tell me what I'm supposed to have done." Her voice was hard as a knotted fist.

"Thanks, I can tell you standing, and tell you not what you're supposed to have done but what you have done. You're a spy. You are a penniless woman living on German money. You pump information out of all your friends. You became Bluck's mistress to pump him more easily. There's a dictaphone in your bedroom. Every word you've said to him and he's said to you is recorded on phonograph discs and in stenographers' notebooks. You transmit the information you get verbally to your maid; she gives it verbally to her husband; he gives it verbally to a servant of the German consul in Rotterdam. Your maid's husband has confessed. You might as well confess."

A silence.

"Is that all?" Her eyes were cold irons piercing him.

"It's enough, isn't it? It's enough to make me want to kill you! By God, you're as responsible as any German soldier for Rush being—"

"John, you don't really believe that about me, do you?"

"It's proved!"

A glint of fear showed in her eyes. "Does any one else believe it?"

"Colonel Pike is at the White House now with the records of your conversations with Bluck."

"He's not!" Her body stiffened to a violent rigidity.

"Oh!" She crumpled in her chair and covered her face with her hands. John started toward her, checked himself, and stood silent, waiting.

For a long time she did not move. Then she shuddered and took her hands from her eyes and looked at him. "If that's so, I suppose I'll have to tell you everything," she said. Her teeth began to chatter.

"Here, take my coat," said John.

"Thanks, I don't need it," she chattered.

"Do as I tell you!" He put it around her shoulders.

"Thanks," she said. Then she smiled at him. "Oh, you're a rotten spy catcher, John! You ought to be making me stand in a draught and beating me every now and then to make me confess."

"You said you'd tell the truth. If you don't I'll . . ."

"Quos ego— Don't try to finish the sentence, John; you'll find it sounds silly." She tried to laugh.

"Are you going to talk or not?"

"Yes; but I'm not keen on beginning. I like you to like me, John, and you may not when I've done."

"I don't now."

"I won't argue the point, but you did give me your coat, you know," she smiled.

"Edith, I didn't come here to—"

"Quite," she said. "You came to hear the confession

of a spy. . . . Well—here goes. Do you want me to begin at the beginning?"

"Yes."

"Well . . . I was born in a little white farmhouse on the boundless prairie and just over the hill was a little red schoolhouse where—"

"Edith! Damn you, you promised!"

"Well, that's the true beginning and I wanted to get in the usual lyric touch to impress the jury."

"Edith, please! Damn it, you're in a hell of a hole!"

"I suppose I am, but I can't quite believe it. It seems rather as if you and I were playing charades. Pike hasn't really gone to the White House with the records, has he?"

"I swear he has."

"Oh, poor Blucky!" she cried, and her head bent and she bit her lips till she was calm again.

"Go on, Edith."

"Well, John, here it is; all of it: Fitzgerald was killed in South Africa. He left me with two children, and another inside me, and exactly nothing a year except my pension as his widow. You know what that is: just enough to starve on, not physically but in every other way. And I was twenty. I tried working, hat shops and department stores. I hated it. And I didn't much care what became of me. You see I'd loved Fitz, really loved him, loved him in a crazy way I've never quite loved anybody else: the way I once thought I might love you." She looked at him a moment, took a quick breath, and shook her head. "I was only sixteen when I ran away with Fitz and I—well—you do understand, don't you?"

"I think so."

"Well, after two years of rotten work I met a man I liked. He was married. I didn't care. We started living together, not openly of course, and he supported me. It was quite natural and decent. Then we had a row one night in Paris. He spoke to his cousin in Voisin's and didn't introduce her to me. I left him. I'll tell you his name if you like."

"I don't want to hear it. Go on."

"Thanks," she said. "Well, then I met Ahmed. He had one wife but he wanted to make me number two. I wouldn't marry him; but we lived at his *yali* on the Bosphorus a whole heavenly year. Then he died. I had a few rings he'd given me and his family were as generous as they could be. They're gentlemen, the Turks, you know. They gave me about a thousand pounds. They couldn't do more. The property's entailed."

"I know," said John.

"You haven't bothered to look that up!"

"Yes."

"But why?"

"Because you're supposed to be living on the money he left you, and you're not. The German government came next."

"John dear, I've had a lot of lovers but never a German."

"I didn't say 'lover,' I said 'Government.'"

"Let me go on, then. You can cross-examine later."

"Go ahead."

She looked at the kitchen wall, her chin in her hand, drew a long breath, and said: "There was an Englishman on the train coming up from Constantinople. He'd been a secretary at the Embassy and was going home to the Foreign Office. He started playing with the children. He loved children more than any man I've ever known. He—" She checked herself suddenly. "Oh, John dear, I'm so sorry, so sorry for you!"

"Go on!" he shouted.

She looked at him and turned her hands out in a gesture of futility. "Well, it's a long trip, you know, from Constantinople to London, five days; and by the time we'd reached Dover he'd begun to fall in love with me, and I liked him because he loved the children. We said good-bye at Victoria and I took a little flat in Clarges Street and furnished it, as I've done this house, on almost nothing. Then he came to call and later he brought his

friends, and all at once I discovered I was a personality, supposedly the inconsolable fiancée of a dead and noble Turk who had romantically left me his money. I was living on the remains of the thousand pounds but I found myself invited everywhere, playing about night and day with the 'Souls.' Then Harry—that was his name—asked me to marry him. I wouldn't. He was heir to a ninth earl and if I'd married him I'd have had to have more children, and I didn't love him enough for that. I'd decided long before that I'd never have any children but the children I'd had for Fitz. So I told him I'd live with him but wouldn't marry him. He didn't want to live with me without marrying me. He was that kind. But finally he did and he supported me. Just as decently as you would have if you'd been living with me and I'd needed money. No checks, no nastiness. The money just appeared in the bank; his solicitors would deposit it in Bank of England notes. Then his uncle died and he succeeded to the title and the estate and his family began to devil him to marry. And he began to devil me to marry him. I wouldn't. Besides the business of children, I didn't love him enough. I'd begun to be a bit bored by him. He wasn't very intelligent and I'd begun to like brains as much as bodies. And I'd met Plitt. So I told Harry to go marry a nice virgin, and he cried a lot but he did finally. Then all at once on his wedding day there was forty thousand pounds to my credit in the bank. Do you want his name?"

"No, but do you remember the date?"

"It must have been about the first of June, 1908."

"Go on, Edith, go on quickly and leave out the details." John began to pace the kitchen floor.

"There's not much more to tell. Plitt was in love with me and I loved him till I met you."

"You mean?" He stood, legs wide, staring at her. "You mean you broke with him after that?"

She nodded.

"Oh, Edith!"

"No, don't misunderstand. I was through with you.

Yes, for life. But I was through with him too. You see I couldn't help believing that we might have had something . . . something real . . . something very beautiful together if . . . Oh, damn it, he was always leaving his dispatch cases!"

They looked at each other. "Go on, will you please, Edith?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Then I came over here and there was Bluck to play with. He's like a big Newfoundland puppy and I do like his chest and arms. That's all."

"Edith, will you tell me just one thing more? Oh, God, it sounds so silly now! Why doesn't your maid ever live with her husband when he comes down to see her?"

"He loves her like the devil, but she won't even let him kiss her. Last year in Rotterdam when he was drunk he got syphilis and he's not cured yet."

John began to laugh, high ringing laughter dropping to deep sobs.

"Buck up, John!" She took his hands. "And tell me the truth about this nonsense you've been talking. Of course that tale about Anna's husband confessing is just a lie they told you to tell. They know I've been living with Bluck, but they don't really think I'm a spy?"

"They do!"

"You never did!"

"I did."

"But why!" She was suddenly purple with anger. "Oh, John, you swine! You wanted to believe it! You wanted to believe it because I wouldn't live with you! Just dirty jealousy! And if you'd had your way I'd have been your mistress not Bluck's, and then I suppose he'd have thought I was a spy. You're all alike! You're—No. Don't look that way. I don't mean that. I don't believe that. . . . But what am I going to do? What am I going to do if even you believed it?"

A silence.

They stared at each other, searching, searching violently, not stirring.

"You'd better come home with me, Edith," said John. "Yes, come and stay with Mildred if you can stand being near me. You mustn't see your maid again till this business is settled. Just leave a line for her saying you'll phone. My car's a block down the street. I'll take you to my house and put you to bed and then go back and try to stop Pike. We'll have to hurry. Go upstairs now and pack a bag. And remember, don't talk up there, there's a dic—"

"Oh, the swine!"

"Hurry, dear."

They tiptoed to her room and she threw clothing into a little black patent-leather suitcase and scribbled a note to her maid. John stood by the door. Then she began to yawn loudly and to hum, "Over there, over there."

He made frantic gestures.

"I wonder if Colonel Pike remembers the night he tried to rape me," she said vaguely, as if she were talking to herself. She yawned again and tiptoed, smiling, to John's side.

"Why the devil did you say that? Did he?" John whispered.

"Of course not! But I thought it would look well at the end of his dictaphone record."



John entered Colonel Pike's office and saluted stiffly. Pike whipped off the green shade which shielded his eyes. "She confessed?"

"She's got nothing to confess. She's as innocent as you or I."

Pike snorted.

"That's true, colonel, she blew your case to bits."

"Where's her money come from?"

"A man who loved her put forty thousand pounds in bank for her when he married. She gave me the date. It was your date."

"Did she give you his name?"

"I didn't ask it."

"What!"

"I didn't need to. But she said 'Harry' once. If you don't believe her, I'll get his name and the attachés in London can see him, or, if he's been killed, his solicitors."

"I don't believe a word of it, Corsey. It's too thin. And how about her maid's husband and his Platonic visits?"

"He's had syphilis for a year. You can verify that, too."

"She must be a damned remarkable woman to make you believe as fishy a story as that."

"If you don't believe it, verify it."

"Not now." Colonel Pike crumpled a sheet of paper into a ball and threw it savagely into his scrap basket. "We've got orders to quash the whole business! She's to be kicked out of Washington, that's all. She ought to be hanged! Damn it, what's the use of our catching spies if this sort of thing happens!"

"What happened? Did you go to the White House?"

"Yes, and the old man called in Bluck and Bluck blubbered and promised not to see her again. Then the old man gave me orders to warn her to leave town and to burn the records."

"But, if he didn't think her guilty, how does he dare order her to leave town?"

"Of course he knows she's guilty. He just couldn't stand the gaff, couldn't stand having a scandal in the administration. Bluck, Abelard, and half the Cabinet have told her official secrets. They'd all be ruined and he wants the records burned so that the Republicans can't dig them out when they come in again. I'm to drop the case, just tell her to leave town and detail a couple of men to watch her. God, it makes me want to leave the service! Politics!"

"Look here." John's eyebrows came slowly together.

"Look here, colonel, that doesn't go. That doesn't go

for one minute. You can't drop the case now. You've got to verify her story. You've got to prove she's innocent. Or guilty. If she's guilty, maybe she only will be sent out of town. That's not the point. The point is that if she's innocent, and I know she is, you have to prove it, and apologize to her, and prove she's innocent to the President and every one else in Washington who knows anything about the case, let them know you went off half-cocked when you hadn't proved your case."

"To whom do you think you're giving orders, major?"

"I don't care a damn to whom I'm giving orders. The White House is a sieve, the War Department is a sieve, every one in Washington will know to-morrow that you've accused Mrs. Fitzgerald of being a spy and that she's to be shipped out of town under surveillance. They'll all know about Bluck and they'll all say she wasn't shot simply because too many prominent men were involved. She'll be ruined, cut by all her friends, ruined for life! She can't clear herself. No matter what she says or does, nobody will ever quite believe her. You've got to clear her. You've slandered her, slandered her with all the authority of the Government behind you. You've officially accused her and, except for the fact that she's had a love affair with Bluck, everything you've said about her is a lie."

"Major Corsey, if you say one more word, I'll have you—"

"And be damned to you!" said John. "You're just afraid of what will happen to your own reputation if you prove the truth. So you want to sacrifice Mrs. Fitzgerald. Gallant, chivalrous Colonel Pike! By God, if you won't follow up the case, I'll follow it! And publicly in the *Times*! Do you understand?"

"Major," Pike's voice was sweet with anger. "I realize that you haven't been quite in your right mind since your son's death."

"Leave him out!" John shouted.

"And if I show forbearance to you now it is because

I understand you are not yourself. This evening I gave you orders to make certain that Mrs. Fitzgerald had no opportunity to communicate the information about our St. Mihiel attack to her maid: First, did you carry out those orders?"

"I did."

"Where is Mrs. Fitzgerald?"

"In my house."

"Under lock and key?"

"In my bed."

"And you expect any one to believe what you say about Mrs. Fitzgerald!" Colonel Pike sneered. "And you think it will assist her reputation if you publish a story to the effect that her money comes from an Englishman whose mistress she was! Even if it were true, do you think that he would admit it? or if he's dead, that his widow would admit it? And if they should acknowledge it, do you think Mrs. Fitzgerald would be received anywhere? As it is, no one knows anything about her. If there's gossip and a few people cut her, they'll forget. But they'll never forget if you make an open scandal."

"I'll get the information and give it to the President."

"And then what? If there's a rumor about Mrs. Fitzgerald it started this evening. Suppose you do get your information, you can't get it for a week, perhaps a month. Then nothing but a public denial and a full statement of the facts will catch the rumor."

A silence.

"That's probably true," said John. "Therefore, colonel, I ask you to go with me now to the White House. I'll tell the President what I know. You'll admit you probably were mistaken. The President will call in each man who knows anything about the case and tell him that the accusations were without foundation. The rumor won't start. Come on."

"Thanks."

"Colonel, if you have a drop of decency in you, you'll do it."

"I think she's guilty."

"Colonel, will you be so kind as to arrange my immediate discharge from the service? I shall be unable to speak to you again, and I wish to be free to take whatever action——"

"I was about to suggest that the condition of your health demanded your immediate release from your duties. But, hell, Corsey, come off your high horse! Suppose she isn't guilty, she's too damned clever anyhow."

"You . . . You!" The little finger of John's left hand clicked down against the palm. He wheeled and stalked out. Colonel Pike's contemptuous laughter pursued him down the stairs.

He ran to the White House. There was a light in the low office building. A night secretary was in the office.

"I must see the President at once," said John.

"You can't possibly, major. He's asleep."

"Then wake him. It's horribly important."

"Sorry, major. I guess it will keep till morning."

"It won't keep. It's about the business on which General Bluck and Colonel Pike were here to-night."

"Oh, that!" grinned the secretary. "I couldn't wake him for that. W. W.'s given orders that he won't speak to any one on that subject. It's closed. We all have orders to forget it. The reporters were after Tumulty, but they didn't get a line for publication. Has she been shipped out of town yet?"

"The reporters have got wind of it already?"

"Sure."

"Then I'm too late anyhow." He turned and walked slowly to the street.

Ten minutes later he opened the door of his room and looked in. The bed-lamp was lighted; but Mrs. Fitzgerald was asleep, her hair spilling down the pillow in a red-gold wave. She was uncovered, naked to the hips, one knee drawn up, her arms outstretched, her hands clenched, her mouth open and contorted. It was as if she were not asleep but had lost consciousness in a moment

of agony. He closed the door and crept to his bathroom. He undressed and cleaned his teeth mechanically. Then he looked at himself in the mirror. "You and Pike have killed her, killed her as dead as Rush!" He peered at his image. "And you liked this war!" His teeth closed on a sob. He stumbled to Mildred's bedroom and groped through the darkness to her unfamiliar bed.

"Oh, John, how you startled me! What is it?"

"Nothing," he said. "Only put your arms around me, will you?"

IV

"Tom, you've got to do something for Mildred." John dropped into a chair in Tom Athyn's library and lighted a cigarette.

"I've done all I can," said Tom. "She doesn't pick up because she doesn't want to pick up. It's really your job, not mine or any doctor's. If you could get her interested in life again—"

"You're sure there's nothing organically wrong?"

"Not a thing. She has an abnormally low blood pressure and severe anemia, that's all."

"Then why don't the tonics and hypodermics do her any good?"

"If one doesn't want to live, one's body usually tries to accommodate one."

"You think she wants to die? Has she ever said that to you?"

"No, she's never said it."

"It's horrible, Tom, the way she's gone to pieces since Rush's death. She's become an old woman. Old! And it's not just the color leaving her hair and the lines around her eyes. She's old inside. She doesn't care about any one or anything. She won't go out or have any one at the house. She doesn't even play the piano. She just sits with a book that she doesn't read, or lies in bed asleep or half asleep, and when she lies there she's so limp and white that she seems almost dead!"

"Well, it's up to you, John; you've got to get her interested in something. Why don't you go abroad, a long trip, do the Mediterranean this winter, go to London for the season, then try Norway and Sweden?"

"We'd be a fine pair, wouldn't we? Can't you see us moving from hotel to hotel, sitting opposite each other

every night at dinner without anything to say, without another soul to speak to but hotel servants, reading fly-specked Tauchnitz editions and old copies of the London *Times* in hotel parlors! If we did that, we'd both die, die of loneliness and boredom."

"Then why don't you get an amusing job abroad?"

"What sort of a job?"

"Say an embassy or a legation. Wayne could get you the appointment."

A pause. John rose and lighted another cigarette. "That's an idea," he said. "I'd like that."

"Then why don't you do it?"

"Well, Wayne doesn't dare move a finger without consulting Leather, and I'm damned if I'll ask Leather. Do you know the dirty little swine has started to pull down Kingsale!"

"No!"

"Yes. Too old-fashioned for him! And not large enough! He's going to replace it by a reproduction of Fontainebleau with thirty bathrooms and an orangery!"

"I'm damned!" grinned Tom. "He is getting a bit regal! But anyhow I don't see why you can't ask Wayne."

"He'd go to Leather for approval. Leather collected the money for his last campaign as well as Harding's and anything he says in this state goes."

"Still, inasmuch as your father used to say to him, 'Leather, my niblick,' I don't see why it's undignified for you to say to him, 'Leather, an embassy.'"

"Because I can't say it to him that way. And I can't say it as a friend. I've always treated him like the little weasel he is."

"On the contrary you've always been very polite to him."

"Blisteringly polite."

"Oh, come on, John! You were never rude to any one."

"Not unintentionally."

"Well, if you'd like an embassy, and it's a question of Mildred's health or your God-almighty pride, don't you

think it's a bit unfair to refuse to speak to your own brother-in-law? You don't know that Wayne will speak to Leather."

"Perhaps it is," said John. "I hadn't thought of it that way." A pause. "Where ought Mildred to go?"

"Some place with climate, not just weather: say Constantinople or Rome."

"They always give Constantinople to the Jew who's contributed most to the campaign fund."

"Then Rome."

"I'll think it over."

"And you might consider yourself a bit while you're thinking. You look like hell, you know, John. Just let me listen to your heart."

"Oh, I'm all right."

"You're not."

"Well, what do you expect!" John flung his cigarette into the fireplace and stood glaring at Tom. "If Mildred's ill because she's got nothing in her life, what do you think I have in mine? I've got a dead son. Dead! And for nothing. Until Wilson ratted at Versailles I had something left; but since Versailles Rush's death is just a joke. Oh, a lovely joke! A nice thing to think about at night! And I've got other blessings. I have a wife who doesn't want me as a lover, a wife who's a chronic invalid and barren. I'll never have another child. I'll never have another woman. I'll—"

"You don't mean to say you're still . . . You're keeping a mistress, surely?"

"I'm not and I'm right not to. I'm not the kind to do that. I wish I could. I can't. Just to buy a dirty little girl is too damned ugly. I want something beautiful in my life. And how can I have anything so long as I'm married to Mildred? What have I to offer any woman? A dirty, sneaking adultery. Nobody I could really love would want that. I wouldn't offer it. And I want children. I want a love that produces life, not a little ten-minute— Oh, hell!"

"That's better than nothing."

"Not for me. It might have been once but not now. I guess I'm growing old. I'm not deviled as I used to be, night and day. That's gone. I just have a terrible sense of unfulfillment, a feeling that my life hasn't counted at all. I want a woman, but I want children more."

"You'll be ready for Voronoff and a monkey gland before long," Tom smiled.

"Voronoff! Why do you suppose any one goes in for that? Imagine any one who has exorcised the devil trying to get him back again!"

"I would," grinned Tom.

"Tom, you don't know what this childlessness is doing to me or you wouldn't sit there grinning like a damned boar ape. Sometimes . . . sometimes when I stand there and watch Mildred asleep, so still and white that she looks as if she were dead, I want her to be dead!"

"Oh, come on, John, that's just nonsense."

"I wish it were. It's the reason I don't want to go away with her. If I could go abroad alone, free, I'd feel young again, I know. I'd find some one I could really love, who'd really love me and give me children. Mildred's like a ball and chain around my neck."

"Then why don't you get divorced?"

A silence.

"I've thought of that, of course, and I can't do it. I can't bear to hurt her. We've been through a lot together. We were close, oh, close for a long time after Rush was killed, as close as one can ever get to Mildred, and I do love her: that is, I have an excruciating tenderness for her every now and then: I'm so sorry for her. And think of the uproar! The family! All our friends! I can't suggest it to her. Sometimes I've wanted to suggest it so much that I've even wished she'd be unfaithful to me and give me an excuse to ask her to divorce me. I just can't bear to hurt her."

"Well, if you do suggest it, you'll probably discover that she wants a divorce as much as you do."

"Did she ever say that to you?" John bent forward eagerly.

"Not Mildred. I must say I admire one thing about her, John. She certainly knows how to keep her mouth shut. What a dignity! She's the only patient I've ever had whom I haven't dared ask a single personal question. But you can be damned sure that if a man and a woman are married and one is unhappy the other is just as unhappy."

"That may be true, but it doesn't mean that Mildred would want a divorce. She can't go on to another man and have a family as I can go on to another woman. She's barren, not I. And who'd fall in love with her at forty-five and as old as if she were fifty-five? All she's got or ever can have is her position as my wife."

"That's the most conceited remark you ever made."

"It was pretty bad, wasn't it?" John grinned. "Well, you'll have to expect that sort of thing, now that I've begun to think like an Ambassador."

There was a sound of feet on the stair outside the library. The door opened and a tall, dark young man stood smiling in the doorway. "Hello, Mr. Corsey. Hello, father. Disturbing you?"

"Not a bit. Have a cigarette, Jack?" said John.

"Thanks." Jack Athyn struck a match, lighted the cigarette, and stood examining its end. "By the way, Mr. Corsey, there's something I've been meaning to say to you for a long time, and as I'm going back to New York to-morrow I suppose I'd better say it now; but I hate . . ." He looked out the window at the leaves dropping from the maple in the yard.

"Fire away," said John.

"I hate to talk about such things, sir, but I have a lot of letters Rush wrote me when we were both at the front; and they're nice letters, gay. I thought you might like to have them."

"Thank you," John swallowed, "I would."

A silence.

"He was always so gay and casual about the war," said Jack Athyn, "so alive and bubbling that it seemed impossible anything should happen to him. He was just a permanent delightful fact in life like—well—like champagne."

"I never saw him quite that way," said John. "How do you mean?"

"For instance—but of course you know—the way we enlisted."

"Yes. But go ahead. I may not know it all."

"Well, you know we'd been on a party with some Gaiety girls the night before and we got back to the Cavendish about five in the morning rather boiled. We'd told Mrs. Lewis to have us called at six to catch the boat train but we hadn't packed. We hadn't an idea of enlisting. But when the valet called us, Rush just turned over in bed and groaned and grinned and said: 'Oh, Jack, look at those damned empty trunks! We can't pack them! Let's go to sleep.' I said I'd never dare face father if we missed the *Mauretania*, passage paid and all. So Rush said: 'Then we'll have to be heroes. There's one excuse he'll like and father will really like.' 'What's that?' said I. 'We'll hear the call of duty,' said Rush. 'We'll enlist, write two noble telegrams, and call it a day, and wake up in time to meet Cloe and Ethel at the stage door.' So we did. He was as casual as that," chuckled Jack.

"Yes," said John, "yes."

"You had heard the story before?" Jack Athyn's brows wrinkled through his smile.

"Yes, of course, of course," said John. "Jolly spirited! wasn't it? Well, Tom, I'll have to go now. Just send the letters over to the house, will you, Jack? Thanks. Good-bye."

He walked to the house on the Square and up to his room. He stood looking out a window. "I just don't know anything at all about life," he said.

John got out of a steaming bath, dried himself, and began to shave, edging to the north corner of the bathroom to escape the shadow of the apartment house which was slowly cutting off the rays of the winter sun. A dozen children were making a snow fort in the Square. Between strokes he looked down at them. He finished shaving, dabbed a handful of cologne on his chin and throat, walked to his room, and dressed.

Pullen knocked. "Come in," called John.

"A letter, Mr. Johnny, by hand."

John opened the letter and read:

THE BELLINGHAM

6/1/21.

Mr. John Corsey.

Dear Sir: I have received many complaints lately from several of our lessees about somebody in your house who takes baths and dresses without drawing the blinds on the third floor of your house. Please have this stopped at once.

Truly yours,

L. STRAUSS.

LS/JR

"Of all the damned impudence!" John's lower jaw crept out till it was undershot. "Is the fellow who wrote this waiting?"

"No, sir, it was just a bellboy from the apartment house."

"Well, what do you think it says, Pullen? Mr. L. Strauss, whoever that may be—"

"It's the apartment house, sir."

"—has the gall to tell me to stop using my bathroom without pulling the blinds! I've bathed in this bathroom since I was four! They've cut off the sun with their damned apartment, and now! Just go over to Mr. L. Strauss, please, Pullen, and tell him from me that he can go to hell."

"Yes, sir."

"And if he has the impertinence to answer you, just

tell him that if his cliff dwellers don't like what they see when they have the effrontery to look in my windows they can look the other way, and if they don't like that he can pull down his damned apartment house. I've done what I'm doing now since before it existed, and I'll go on using my house as I see fit."

"Yes, sir. Do you really want me to see him, sir?"

"No. I suppose I'd better get hold of the owners and have him fired."

"I think he owns it, sir."

"Probably! It would be Strauss or Cohen or Levy! By God, I'd like to blow it up! Just having it there has almost ruined the Square." He stomped downstairs and turned toward Mildred's room.

"Mrs. Corsey's still asleep, sir, I think," warned Pullen.

"Of course!" John checked himself, paused, then shook his head angrily and, turning the knob of the door with a difficult gentleness, walked toward Mildred's bed. A sheet was drawn up to her chin, the pillow was covered by her faded hair, the thin thread of her lips was pale purple. He stood and looked at her. Her eyelids seemed a trifle parted, but she was utterly still. There was no sign of her breathing, the sheet tight drawn across her flat breasts did not rise and fall. She was limp and white. She looked almost dead . . . almost dead.

He stood peering at her, and slowly his jaw crept out till it was undershot.

Then suddenly she was sitting up, shuddering, right hand raised as if to ward off a blow, eyes white, and she was crying: "Don't, John! Don't! Oh, go away! Go away!"

He shrank out of the room, aghast. As he stumbled up the stairs he heard her lock her door.

He stood in his room staring at the floor. He could hear her walking in the room below, walking quickly, running.

"She saw me . . . she knew what I was thinking. . . ." He stared at the scurrying sounds in the room below. Her door opened. He opened his door and braced to

meet her. But she was running downstairs. The front door opened and slammed. He walked back to his room and locked the door and began to pace the floor, up and down, up and down, little finger of his left hand clicking down against the palm and being bent back savagely by his right hand. Up and down, up and down.

A knock.

"What is it?"

Pounder's voice: "Will you lunch at home, sir?"

"I don't want any lunch, and please telephone the office that I won't be down to-day."

Up and down, up and down, pacing, pacing, staring at the rug.

The early winter twilight smeared the Square with a sooty wash. Lights sprang in the apartment house, in the Club, in Fulke Greville's house, one light in Aunt Gertrude Carrollton's, arc lights in the Square. Above the arc lights, far off, blazed the erect white finger of the City Hall and above it shone the stars. He looked at the stars.

There was a timid knock.

"Who is it?"

"Me, sir," said Pullen. "Pounder didn't want to come up but dinner's served."

"Is Mrs. Corsey in?"

"No, sir. She telephoned, she won't be home for dinner."

"I'll be down in a minute," called John.

Amontillado. Mersault with the oysters from the Club's private bed. Black bean soup. Tournedos bernaise and a Clos du Roi 1911, épinards en branches, bombe glacée, clear topaz port.

He sat in the library waiting. The house was as silent as if no one had ever lived in it. He went up to his room and waited. The lights in the houses around the Square began to disappear. He walked down to Mildred's room and searched for a possible letter. There was no letter.

He walked upstairs and waited. There were no lights in the houses around the Square. He began to pace the floor, up and down, up and down. There was a slight creak on the stair. He opened his door. The door of Mildred's room thudded faintly. He tiptoed to his bureau and brushed his hair. Then he walked slowly down to Mildred's room. He turned the knob. The door was locked. "Mildred," he said. There was no answer. "Mildred!" A silence.

He walked slowly up to his room, but before he entered it he took off his shoes, and stood staring at the floor which divided him from the silence of the room below. His breath came in a shuddering sigh: "Maybe it's just as well. I couldn't explain that anyhow. I meant it."



Pullen was helping him into his fur overcoat when Mildred walked down the stairs, stiff and erect as a young bamboo. She was dressed for the street. Her lambskin coat clung trimly to her flat stomach. She was drawing on her gloves.

"Up already!" said John.

"Yes," said Mildred. "I've decided to run down to Palm Beach and I'm off to see if I can get accommodations for to-day."

They stood looking into each other's eyes. His eyes were asking a reprieve. Her eyes refused it. His eyes gave way.

"You're really feeling well enough to stand the trip?" he asked.

"Yes," said she. "Since yesterday morning I've felt much better." Again they looked at each other.

"I'm glad," said John. "I'll be at the station to see you off."

"Please don't bother. I'm not sure whether I'll get aboard at High Street or West Chesterbridge."

"Then I'll say good-bye now," said John, and bent over her stiff fingers.

She went out.



"Here it is, Corsey!" George Milligan rolled into John's office, slapped a long sheet of figures on the desk, and smiled till the under muscle of his thick upper lip bulged. "Hundred and eighty-seven thousand clear profit!"

"Bully!" said John. "You've certainly handled things wonderfully, George; and if anybody deserves a fifty per cent raise it's you."

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you want it?"

"You bet! But how about your brother and Mr. Leather?"

"They'll have to stand for it. I made up my mind years ago that the first decent profit we made I'd raise everybody who's been with us ten years or more by fifty per cent and five years or more by twenty per cent."

"You're not really going to do that?" Milligan's bulky body shook to chuckles.

"Yes. And I'm glad you're for it. I thought you might kick."

"Of course I'm for it. I'm in on it. And it's damned nice of you. But, my Lord, you certainly have nerve! They'll be sore as boils."

"Let them be. The staff's been underpaid for thirty years and I may not be here long anyhow."

"What's wrong? You're not sick?" Milligan's heavy hand fell on John's shoulder affectionately.

"No, but I'm sick of Chesterbridge and I'm thinking of resigning."

"You're not going to leave town?" There was a shocked distress in Milligan's voice.

"Probably."

"Oh, don't do that, Corsey! Run away for a holiday but don't pull out for good. By the way, you don't mind if I go off for a couple of weeks, do you?"

"You deserve three months if you want it. Where are you planning to go?"

"Oh, just to get some golf at Pinehurst. I may go on to Augusta or Miami if it's cold in North Carolina but, if you want to wire me, better make it the Carolina at Pinehurst. They'll forward."

"When do you want to leave?"

"I'm pretty tired right now, so for me the sooner the better. But what's this about your resigning? Of course I won't go if you're leaving. But I hope it's not true. What would you do? Where would you go?"

"Never mind now. I won't go at any rate for a few months. I intend to have some conversations this morning about an idea I have. I'll be more definite when you return. Perhaps I shan't go after all. Well, have a good time at Pinehurst and please understand the matter of my possible resignation is strictly between ourselves."

"Sure. So long, and thank you for the raise."

"Before you go, please work it out for the rest of the staff and just put it in next week's pay envelopes without saying anything."

"Sure. But it's dangerous, Corsey. Jesus! Half of them will fall dead with the shock!"



That night John sat at the writing table of his room on the Square and addressed an envelope: The Right Honourable Lord Corsey, St. James's Square, London, England. Then he wrote:

Dear Ted:

I've been thinking of writing you this letter for some months. I haven't, I suppose, because I really don't like to write it. My roots in Chesterbridge are deeper than I knew, and pulling up isn't easy. But I know now that I have to get out, so here goes: I want to resign the editorship of the Times. Please don't think I'm sore about anything or angry at any one, except perhaps myself. I just want to get away to a new environment. I asked Wayne this morning to get

me a job abroad, the embassy at Rome if he could manage it. This is not a sudden whim and I'm not having a nervous breakdown or anything of the sort. It's a quiet, slow decision and irrevocable. Certain events have made me act now; but I've been skating on thin ice for a long time and if it hadn't broken to-day it would have broken to-morrow or next month. Will you please, therefore, accept this resignation.

You'll want an explanation. I don't know that I can explain so that you will understand. There's so much to say that a letter is inadequate and there are lots of things one doesn't put on paper. The simplest statement I can make is that my life in Chesterbridge no longer seems a life, just a rather silly existence. My work's not worth while in itself, and now that I haven't got Rush it seems futile to go on rolling up position and prestige and money. For whom?

And it's not just losing Rush. Chesterbridge has changed, and I don't like the changes. Half the people I have respected and liked have moved into Hillcrest Cemetery, and I don't like the people who have taken their places. I suppose you know that John Collingwood died last week. (A funeral like the Concourse before 1900. Every one there. Eight tenants from his country place bearing the coffin and weeping as if their hearts were broken. 1776.) He's dead and the town is being run by Leather, Roediger, Yenks, Lowden et al. Wayne is Governor, but he is really Leather's office boy. Our beloved cousin Paul has just been interred in the State Supreme Court. Since Uncle Drayton has been President of the University he's had to spend his time going around hat in hand begging and, of course, his chief almoners are Leather, Roediger and Co., so that he's under their thumb, too. Dear old Fulke is slipping fast. He resigned from the Club last week after an incident of which you certainly haven't heard. A charwoman found him seated at six A.M. before a front window of the Club in one of the big leather armchairs reading the Sunday paper, naked except for a silk hat! Of course it was reported to the Governors and they spoke to him and he resigned. When I told him I regretted, etc., he merely said, "Doesn't it seem to you that Chesterbridge is becoming a bit stuffy, just a trifle stuffy!"

Leather is amazing! He had such huge war profits that now he's running the town absolutely, just the way grand-

father used to. But in spite of his power I suspect that he's not very happy. His wife is said to be almost gaga. Really demented. She's been billed to sing seventeen times at the Opera and has had seventeen last-minute colds and received in her box with an appropriate husk in her voice. Now, they say, she sings all day in the Fontainebleau they've built at Kingsale, imagining she's Melba. It's really almost pathetic because the little shrimp does love her.

Well, that's Chesterbridge 1921. No—there are more delights: Movies. They've killed the theaters. All we get now is a week or two of a second-class company in a play that's run a year or more in New York. And there's a new pest, the worst yet: radio. You won't believe it, but even people we know have those things in their houses and listen to them! The pleasures of prohibition you can imagine. It's simply destroyed the possibility of civilized living. There aren't ten houses in town with good wine in the cellar. I'm down to about twenty dozen. Instead of wine, people drink synthetic gin. As a result one never knows when one drinks a cocktail in the house of a friend whether or not one will go blind or begin having denatured alcohol throbs in one's eyes and cerebellum. The gin burns one's stomach out and, of course, without wine food doesn't exist. One can't get sherry for terrapin or a pudding or even vin blanc for a sauce. And can you imagine having to eat a sole without a Chablis or a Pouilly? Or a roast without a Burgundy? Of course nobody cares a damn about cooking any more. To eat is to stuff enough calories into one's body to support a load of bootleg gin and prune-juice whisky. And at that, to my mind, an honest bootlegger is the noblest work of God we have in this country at present.

It's curious. There's an apparent success everywhere. Everybody in town is making and spending more money than ever before, but nobody seems to be getting any happiness out of it. And it's the same everywhere. The whole country is terribly successful, terribly in the Erewhon sense, devoured by the success of its own machines. The worst of it is that men who ought to be street cleaners and grocers and dry-goods clerks and butchers and mechanics, and would be in any other country, have millions and millions. They *are* the country to-day. We may have been here three hundred years

and they may have been here twenty or fifty, but the whole taste of the country has become their taste and its standards have become their standards. What they want, they have. They're the market and the demand creates the supply. We don't count. The other day a German Jew banker had the nerve to write me that an editorial of mine was un-American. Un-American! The worst of it is I suspect he's right.

I suppose I ought to give you an account of my stewardship of the Times, but I can't find much to say. We've published a decent paper. The establishment of the evening edition has about doubled the value of the property. This year's profits are \$187,000. Next year's ought to be larger even though I've raised the wages of all the staff. That young fellow MacCallum is the best man to follow me if you want the paper run as I've run it. I hope you'll give him the chance. I'd like to hang on until I go abroad. Wayne felt sure he could get me the job, therefore I'll probably go this spring—if not to Rome, then to Vienna or Brussels or Peking. I really don't care where I go. I just have to get away, have to feel again that there's a possibility of something exciting in life.

Mildred left this morning for Palm Beach so that I'm all alone on the Square, and nowadays this house has a bad kind of sadness when you're alone in it—too full of ghosts—so you'll excuse me if I sound gloomy. I'm not. Actually for the first time in a long while I have some hope of entertainment ahead. You'll also excuse the length of this letter, and please keep the news it contains under your own hat. I may not get the embassy and I don't want talk. But in any case my resignation from the Times is final.

My regards to Pauline and my thanks to you for your long-suffering patience.

Yrs
JOHN.



Palm Beach, Friday.—Mr. and Mrs. J. Stoneham Leather entertained last night in their palatial home "Villa Medici" in honor of their house guest, Mr. George Milligan of Chesterbridge. Among those present were Mr. and Mrs. L. Doheny Biddle, Mrs. Saltonstall Dodge, Mr. A. J. Carroll Schwab, Mr. Reginald Bloomberg, Mr. and Mrs. Van Rensselaer Roediger, Mrs. John Corsey.

John rang the bell on his desk and Miss Sidel's teeth appeared.

"Miss Sidel, to what address did you send that telegram to Mr. Milligan day before yesterday?"

"Pinehurst."

"And from what point did he reply?"

"Pinehurst."

"Will you please verify that?"

She went out. He looked again at the newspaper paragraph. She returned.

"Here it is, sir, from Pinehurst. Do you want it?"

"No. Thanks. That's quite enough." He took his pen-knife from his waistcoat pocket and carefully cut the paragraph from the paper and put it in his wallet. He looked out the window. "Curious," he said.



Apple logs six feet long were blazing in the fireplace of Bobby Corsey's Long Island studio, casting uneasy shadows on the white plaster walls and uneasy lights on the peaked wood roof. Through a huge window which composed the north wall of the room pale winter moonlight intruded on a litter of stacked canvases, easels, paint tubes, brushes. Two tables stood close to the fire and at them sat four gentlemen and four ladies concentrating on the vital business of bridge. At one table sat Bobby, Mrs. Fitzgerald, Eleanor Sinclair, and a dark youth of forty named Lanier whose successful activities as a stock-broker had left him with the same face and mind he had borne as a Harvard undergraduate. At the other table sat John Corsey, a tall carrot-haired girl who answered to the call of "Reds," a short Spanish woman wearing black hair, black lace, and black shawl, and an elderly Russian of twenty-four who was Bobby's assistant.

"Four hearts!" bellowed Bobby. Eleanor spread her hand, rose and walked to a refectory table where, between pewter torchères, there stood fruits, water, soda, and whisky of a sort. She poured a glass of water. John, also dummy, rose and joined her.

"We ought to hear from Wayne to-morrow," said Eleanor. "He's seeing Harding to-night. But I'm sure you'll get it, John, and I do hope it will make you happier."

He shrugged his shoulders and poured a finger of the alleged whisky.

"Isn't Edith Fitzgerald looking well?" whispered Eleanor. "Spirited! One would never suspect what she's been through. I can't see a difference in her."

"Except in her mouth and eyes," said John. "They're tragic, I think. I don't believe she ever forgets for one instant. Of course I've seen her only this evening but it seems to me that she's hurt terribly inside. She's too nice to every one. It's as if she were thinking: 'That person thinks I'm a spy. I've got to convince him that I couldn't be.'"

"Don't you really think she was?"

"Eleanor! I've told you I know she wasn't!" John flushed.

"But so many people who were on the inside in Washington have told me that she was. And how can she bear life at all if she wasn't? The unfairness would—"

"You've borne a life that once seemed rather terrible to you." A pause. She looked down at her hands. "One can get used to anything, I suppose," he said.

"You mustn't think life's really bad for me." She looked up. "It was bad for a time: so long as I kept comparing what I had with what I'd hoped to have. But when I faced going away, never seeing Wayne again, and taking the children, I saw that the life I'd have would be worse than the one I'd be leaving, so I just accepted what I had; and since then it's been almost easy. That's what every one learns eventually, I suppose: to compare what one has, not with one's dreams but with one's alternatives." A pause. "But I can't see that Mrs. Fitzgerald has any life."

"She has her boys."

"Two at Eton and one in the navy. She almost never

sees them. She just goes wandering around the world. From lover to lover, I suppose. Do you think she and Bobby are—"

"I should hope not!" said John. "He's already got one red-haired mistress in the house, and a black. He can't need many more."

"Thank Heaven he doesn't marry them any longer! At least Altieri cured him of that."

"Game and rubber!" Bobby thumped the table, chuckled, rose, and walked toward his brother and sister, running a huge hand through his gray hair which curled forward like the crest of an angry white cockatoo.

"Will you be hunting to-morrow, Bobby?" asked Eleanor.

"Hunt! Not I! 'M 'fraid! Havndunid since I broke Sting's back!" His speech was a torrent of telescoped fragments punctured by bellowed syllables. "And werd I geta horse to *carry* me." Chuckles shook his two hundred and fifty pounds. He poured a glass of whisky. "Good *night*!" he called to the bridge players who were rising from the tables. "Go to bed now. I gotta work to-morrow. Come *on*, Reds!"

"You owe me six dollars," said the red-haired girl to John, ignoring Bobby's bellow. John handed her the money and she stalked sullenly after Bobby.

Mrs. Fitzgerald was digging in a green bead bag. She drew out a note and gave it to Lanier. "Thanks. Good night." He shook her hand. From her little silver slippers, whose toes peeked from beneath a hooped skirt of green brocade, to her tight bodice and high-drawn hair she was a lady of 1860, pure, immaculate.

"Don't go to bed yet," said John. "I want to talk to you. Come over to the fire."

They warmed their backs at the blaze. The Spanish woman, Eleanor, and the Russian were munching apples at the refectory table. John looked into her eyes, which more than ever seemed his own. "Now tell me everything that's happened to you," he said. "Everything!"

"There's not much to tell. I've traveled everywhere. Wherever I go I have a jolly time for a while; then the story catches up with me and people are different—even in Japan and India. There's not much of anywhere left to go."

"Oh, Edith, I'm so sorry!"

"Oh, don't be sorry. I have a pleasant enough time. I'm getting used to it."

"You can't be! It must be horrible, horrible!"

"It's not. The world's just a different place, that's all. One gets used to it. What are you doing?"

"Leaving the *Times* and going abroad. Rome, I think, as Ambassador."

The weary look on her face did not alter. "Is your wife going with you?"

"I don't know . . . I rather hope not."

"When are you going over?"

"April, I suppose. Where will you be?"

"Cannes, probably."

"Why don't you come down to Rome for April and May?"

"Cui bono?" Her tired eyes smiled.

"It's *not* impossible, Edith!" he blurted.

"No," she said slowly. "No. I suppose it's not. I am glad to be with you again, dear John." Her gaze met his like a kiss.

"You sweetheart!" His fingers caught hers stealthily and pressed them. "Come down in April," he whispered. "And stay! Stay! I swear I'll make you happy, Edith."

"For how long?"

"For always!"

She smiled.

"How do you know what will happen?" he argued. "How do I? Come, and we'll let whatever comes come. You have nothing in your life and I have less in mine. You may be dead next year or I may be. Or my wife may be."

"Oh, no!" she smiled. "Wives don't die."

"Edith, I want you, I need you. I need you now! And you know you need me, too."

She looked at him. "Perhaps I do," she said.

His arm quivered against hers and his nails dug into her hand. She too was quivering. Then her eyes signaled the presence of the apple munchers and he turned. Eleanor was approaching, nibbling a core.

"Then good night to you." Very formally he took Mrs. Fitzgerald's hand, clicked his heels, and bowed over her fingers; but as he bowed he looked into her eyes and his forefinger pressed the inside of her palm and when his lips touched the back of her hand they lingered for an answer. Her hand rose and pressed his lips. "Good night," he said, and she turned casually to Eleanor and said, "Have you tried Guerlain's new lip sticks?"

"Good night, Eleanor. Good night. Good night." He walked up to his room, shaved his clean chin, bathed, flung on his dressing-gown, turned out his light, opened his door a half-inch and listened. Water was running into a bathtub at the far end of the corridor. There was no other sound. He tiptoed quickly down the corridor, whirled through a door, and turned a key.

She was a sheaf of orange and flame chiffons and two white arms outstretched. "Oh, I've waited so long!" she panted before his lips stopped her open mouth. His kisses drained her eyes and lips and breasts. Then suddenly he was still, quiet with a shrinking, fearful quietness. She was writhing against him with little groans. He grew rigid and still as if he were frozen. Her nails sank into his neck and her mouth groped for his mouth. He wrenched away from her. "Oh!" she sat up. He stood by the bedside shivering, his right elbow covering his eyes. "I'm so ashamed, Edith! I'm so ashamed!" "Never mind, dear, never mind," she panted. "Oh, Christ, I can't even look at you! Oh, good God!" He fled back to his room, stripped off his dressing-gown, and stared at his

naked body. "Lord God, Lord God!" His eyes grew wider and wider.



A long train of orange Pullmans slid into High Street Station and stopped with a clank of couplings. John and Pullen stood by the panting engine. A spate of mink and squirrel coats gushed down the platform. Mildred appeared, baby lamb on green cloth, striding like an athletic girl, her lips a thread of scarlet in tanned cheeks.

"Mildred, dear, you're looking marvelously well!" He leaned to kiss her. She turned her lips slightly and let his kiss touch her cheek. Then she took his arm and carried him down the platform with the lifting vigor of her stride.

"Dear John, I'm so glad to see you! I did have such a good time. You should have come. You're not looking a bit well. I'll have to take care of you now."

"Oh, I'm all right."

"One gets so used to tan and color down there. How's everything going?" Her voice was deep, perfect, and caressing.

"Oh, all right."

"You don't look it. You ought to run down for a month yourself."

They entered the waiting limousine. Mildred peered out at the slush-smeared streets. "It's so quiet. I never remember it so quiet."

"No trolleys," he said. "One misses the thump-thump, thump-thump, as they cross the intersections."

"Quite. What's happened?"

"Strike. Haven't you read? It's almost a revolution. The men burned the North Chesterbridge car barn last night."

"How thrilling! What are you doing about it?"

"Well, I've got to go to the office now and write an editorial telling Wayne to send in the National Guard and establish martial law."

"Is it so bad as that?"

"As bad as can be. There are a lot of reds and anarchists in town and we're sure the strikers have Bolshevik money behind them. Leather won't deal with the union, and for once he's right. I'm a hundred per cent with him. The men aren't just asking for higher wages; they want representatives on the Board! And they're using violence. Wayne ought to declare martial law and shoot a few of them."

"It's funny for you to be supporting Leather."

"It's not because he's Leather. In this case he happens to represent law and order and the rights of private property and freedom of contract."

"I'm glad. I like him, really like him, John. I saw a lot of them at Palm Beach before he left."

"So I gathered from the papers. Why did you never write me, Mildred? It was embarrassing to me more than once not to know what you—"

"Dear John, excuse me." Her crisply gloved fingers fell on his knee. "But you do know why." She looked into his eyes.

"Yes. I suppose I do." He looked out the window. "But I'd have been a lot less unhappy if I'd known you'd . . . well . . . yes, forgiven me."

"Don't let's talk about it any more, John. I've forgotten."

"Thanks," he said. "And by the way, child, I've got a bit of news for you. I've resigned from the *Times* and I'm going to be Ambassador to Italy."

She looked at him, lips parted, and the color suddenly left her face.

"What's so tragic? I thought you'd be pleased."

"Oh, I am, of course I am. It's a great honor . . . but—"

"But you don't want to go with me."

"No, it's not that . . . but—"

"You do want to go then?"

"If you want."

"You don't want."

Her teeth caught her lower lip and her gloved fingers twisted. "No," she said, "I don't."

"At least that's frank," he said. "Thanks."

"It's just . . . John . . . I'm feeling so well, so very well, I'd planned to go to work, to go on Wayne's campaign committee and—"

"You can, my dear; I shan't object. One does need a woman to receive one's guests in an Embassy, but if you—"

"Of course I'll go if you need me, John." She was wilting visibly like a transplanted flower. "Is it really settled? Have you accepted?"

"And resigned from the *Times*. The appointment will be announced in Washington next week."

"Oh!" she said, very small.

"Why on earth do you want to stay in Chesterbridge?" He searched her white face.

"I don't know, it's just . . . well, we have so long, John, I . . . I don't know."

"Well, think it over. You don't have to go. And for goodness' sake let's be as frank as we can with each other, Mildred."

"Yes, let's," she said tremulously, "let's, let's."

The limousine halted at the house on the Square. Pounder ran out and opened the door of the car. "Did you have a nice trip, madam?"

"Yes. Yes. Enchanting." She hurried up the brown-stone steps.



"Mrs. Corsey home yet?" John handed his overcoat to Pounder.

"No, sir."

"Where is she?"

"Dining at Mrs. Chatham's, I believe, sir."

"Damned long dinner! Pounder, will you please allow no package of any sort to come into the house until this

strike is over? Mr. Leather got a bomb at his office this afternoon and I—”

“You don’t say, sir! Was he—”

“Nobody hurt. It didn’t go off. But I don’t want anybody killed in this house, and if you see any one hanging around please let me know at once or phone the police yourself.”

“Yes, sir.”

The telephone in the hall rang. John answered. MacCallum’s voice barked: “There’s a riot! Shooting, Mr. Corsey! Fifth and Elm. Big stuff! The forms are locked for the State edition. What shall—”

“Unlock them. Get it in somehow. I’ll be down as soon as I can get a taxi. Tell everybody to stand by and we’ll make the trains O.K. Good-bye.” He jiggled the receiver hook till central answered. “Pleasant 3000. . . . Mr. Corsey speaking. Taxi at once, and hurry!” He put on his coat and hat and paced the hall listening for the taxi’s arrival.

An engine thumped and brakes groaned in the street. He opened the front door and hurried down the steps. Then a man got out of the taxi and a woman followed him: George Milligan and Mildred.

“Hello,” said John. They wheeled. “Do you mind if I take your taxi, Milligan? There is a riot on and I’ve got to get back to the office. I’ve ordered one, but it’s not come yet. You can have it when it comes.”

“Certainly,” said Milligan, peering at the taximeter and reaching for his wallet.

“Don’t bother, man, I’m in a hurry.”

“No. I’d rather.”

“Oh, go to the devil!” John laughed and pushed between Milligan and the chauffeur.

“You’d better let him pay it, boss,” the chauffeur grinned. “It’s sixteen dollars already.”

“Yes, yes, I—I kept him waiting some time,” stutted Milligan.

"Thank you, I much prefer to pay it. *Times* office." He entered the taxi and slammed the door.

When he returned to his home an hour later the little finger of his left hand was clamped against the palm. He stood on the pavement looking up at Mildred's room. There was no light. He walked up the stairs treading heavily, loudly, and stood waiting outside her door. There was no sound. He started to open the door. Then he stopped, shrugged his shoulders, and walked up to his room. He stood looking at himself in the long mirror in the wardrobe door: pouches under bloodshot blue eyes, red bars below the pouches and a red band across the bulge of his forehead where his derby had gripped. "Horns!" he smiled savagely. "Horns, Mr. Corsey, sprouting from your forehead!" He bowed to his unlovely image, turned, and started to tear off his clothes. "Oh, hell, it's impossible!" He stared at the floor. "Mildred! With that guttersnipe!"

/



Wayne Sinclair was pacing John's office.

"You've got to call out the troops," said John.

"I won't do it." Wayne halted and faced him. "There'd just be more bloodshed. And what's the use? The strike's collapsing. Every leader the men have is in jail. The magistrates are holding them without bail. They'll all get five or ten or twenty years—just as many as Leather wants them to get. He has the police, the magistrates, and the judges, all in his pocket. He's bringing in strike-breakers by every train. He'll win without troops."

"You're a fool, Wayne. It's silly even from your own point of view."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Coolidge made his reputation by sending troops into Boston. You can make yours by smashing this strike."

"Thanks for the compliment to both of us. Has it ever occurred to you that Coolidge did it because he thought it ought to be done, and that I won't do it because I think

it ought not to be done? John, you're the most insulting man I've ever known. Do you think nobody ever acts from conviction?"

"No politician."

Wayne looked a long time at him.

"You know, John, you used to be a decent sort of fellow; but you've got soured somehow, changed into something mighty ugly, and you're beginning to see everybody through your own eyes, warped, rancid. I'm glad you're going away. Maybe you'll get cured. I don't want to see you again till you are cured."

"Thanks," said John. "I shall face that prospect with considerable pleasure."

Wayne glared and walked out. John scowled at the closed door. Little knocks fluttered on it and Leland Roach's eyebrows bristled into the room. He was laughing.

"He-he-he! I just want to show you what I've written about the exhibition they opened to-day at the Art Club, Mr. Corsey. It's an insult to art! Positively an insult! Even vicious! The Brancusis! A thing called a portrait of a lady that's nothing but a—an organ of generation! And the others are—"

"I haven't time now," said John. "Soak them as hard as you please."

He took his hat and left the office. Trolleys manned by scabs, policemen on the platforms, were creeping up Kernel Street. He stood and watched the trolleys pass.

"Yah! Scab!" a woman yelled from the pavement beside him. He looked at her. She was an Irishwoman with broad hips and deep maternal breasts and a wide mouth distorted by hatred. He crossed Kernel Street and sat on a bench in the dilapidated square. The April air was warm with sudden spring. He took off his coat. Buds were bursting in green fans on the maples under the windows where Nina Michaud had lived. He sat a long time looking at the windows. "Maybe Wayne's right about me," he said. Then he rose and walked heavily up

Pleasant Street and crossed the Square. Crocuses and hyacinths were pushing in the trim beds, hundreds of children were playing tag, skating, skipping rope. He let himself into his home.

As he dropped his derby on the table in the hall he became aware of figures in the library, familiar figures in an unpleasant closeness. He looked in. Mildred and George Milligan were standing side by side, facing him, and Milligan's right hand was holding Mildred's left. He entered the room. They did not move. There were muscles twitching in Mildred's cheeks and Milligan's eyes were blinking, blinking as if they could not bear to remain open and look at him.

"Good afternoon," said John.

A silence.

An automobile honked in Pleasant Street. "We can't go on any longer this way, Corsey. I suppose you know that I love Mildred." Milligan's thick lips were trembling. The little finger of John's left hand bent slowly down and his hands clamped behind his back. "Get out," he said quietly.

Milligan did not move, and Mildred's left arm stiffened to a tenser rigidity.

"Get out!" His voice rose and his fingers behind his back cracked as they tugged for release.

"Go, George," said Mildred, thrusting away his hand.

A silence. Milligan looked from Mildred to John, then back to Mildred.

"Yes. Go!" she said.

He walked past John, his eyes ashamedly defiant, his thick lips set. The lock of the front door clicked.

A silence. A silence rising in pitch like a drawn fiddle string.

"What do you want to know?" Mildred's voice scraped.

He did not answer. His mouth hung half open, his neck was thrust forward, his jaw undershot.

"What do you want to know?" she cried.

"Nothing."

A silence.

"John!"

"You might give me the name of your lawyer. I'll employ Uncle Drayton."

"I don't want a divorce."

His brows rose to a sneering amazement and his voice enunciated exquisitely, "Would you mind telling me, then, what you are planning?"

Spots of red burned in her cheeks. "I'm planning to live with you as you've lived with me—only frankly."

"And what pray do you mean by that?"

"I won't conceal my . . ."

"And you think that I've been concealing infidelities."

"I know you have."

"Then it may amuse you to know that I've had the misfortune to be faithful to you since our marriage."

"That's not true, John!" Her voice was low and rich with scorn.

"It's not quite fair, my dear, to judge me by yourself."

"I suppose you never lived with Edith Fitzgerald!"

"I did not."

"Then why did she leave Plitt and follow you to Washington?"

"Does it occur to you, my dear, that the subject under discussion is your adultery with the son of a drunken bar sweep."

"Whose sister you found attractive enough to make love to! Oh, don't lie, John! I know!"

His face flushed. "Where did you—"

"She told George."

"The little—"

"You know you've never been faithful to me one month since our marriage! You left me in London on our wedding trip to go to that Michaud woman in Paris!"

"I didn't even see her."

"Oh, John, don't lie, it's too late! You admitted that the day Rush was born."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"When I asked you to promise if I died not to give him to her to bring up. You admitted you'd been a swine."

"But I didn't mean that, Mildred."

"You knew why I asked."

"I didn't even know you knew she was in Paris. Who—"

"You pretended Bobby was in a scrape. I told Aunt Eleanor, and Sherbury went over because Bobby wanted to marry his niece and he found Bobby wasn't in any scrape and that you'd gone over to see that Michaud girl, and Aunt Eleanor told me to watch out. And I knew without being told! You weren't even glad I was having Rush! You weren't in love with me! You'd spent two days with her! You were never really in love with me! I don't see why you ever married me!"

"Neither do I," said John. "But I tell you this: I've had nothing to do with any woman since we were married. I didn't even see Nina Michaud. I can prove it to you. I still have a letter upstairs in my desk, a letter I left for her in Paris that she never got. I'll . . ." A pause. "No. I'm sorry. I can't show it to you."

"And that's your proof of faithfulness!"

"Yes. And it is proof!"

"Then why—"

"Because it's worse than if I'd lived with her."

A silence that carried the reverberation of his statement echoing like a succession of oaths.

"So let's continue this conversation on the basis that we've both been committing adultery," he said. "And let's sit down. You're looking a bit wobbly and I suppose I am, too."

She felt behind her for the arm of the red plush arm-chair and dropped into it, and covered her face with her hands. He sat on the sofa, thighs shaking like the thighs of an old man.

"Oh, John, I want to believe you. I know you're not a liar. But there's so much I can't explain any other way."

"And I don't care to explain. So please consider me

adulterous and let's get on to the business of our divorce."

"I don't want a divorce."

"Thanks. I do."

"John, I don't want to believe . . . If you haven't had any one but me all these years, why haven't you?"

"Because I was married to you."

"Oh!"

"Don't be silly! Of course I don't mean sanctity of marriage and sacraments and that drip. I mean just what I say: sneaking adulteries with little bitches like Rose Milligan were just too ugly. And with women like Edith Fitzgerald . . . well, at first, adultery wasn't good enough. I wanted marriage, a full life. And there was Rush. I didn't want to give him up."

Her teeth caught her lower lip, her hands covered her eyes, and she began to sob, "Oh, it's so horrible, so horrible!"

He rose halfway from the sofa. "Don't, Mildred. Please!" He sank back.

She wrenched her fingers from her eyes. "It is horrible! John, I'd never have done it if I hadn't thought you'd— Oh!" She was sobbing again.

"Pull up, Mildred. That has nothing to do with it. It was just chance I didn't. I've wanted to have other women often enough. Tried to. Lately the only reason I haven't is because I'm not able. I'm no better than you."

"You are! You are! I'm . . . Oh, John, why did you look at me that horrible way? as if—as if you wanted me to die!"

"I did," said John.

She stiffened as if he had slapped her. Her sobs ceased and she stared at him.

"You see I'm rather worse than you," he said. "So don't bother any more. I don't blame you for anything. I don't understand your taste for Milligan, but there's no accounting for tastes. I'll make no trouble about divorce. I suppose you've been living with him since Washington."

"John, I don't believe you wanted me to be dead! You're just trying to be kind to me, to make me think I haven't been unfair to you, terrible to you!"

"Mildred, what's the use of talking about what's past? The point is, you love Milligan, you've been living with him a long time and—"

"I haven't. I went to him the day you looked at me that way."

He swallowed. "Well, you were entitled to. And I must say he's agreed with you. I hope he'll always make you as happy and keep you as healthy. Between Wayne and Paul and Uncle Drayton we can certainly arrange private hearings and a decree without any publicity."

"But I don't want to divorce you, John."

"Then what on earth do you want?"

"I . . ." She began to tremble and to twist her long fingers, looking down at the floor shivering. "I—I don't know what I want now. . . . I—I can't ask you now for what I meant to. . . . And—and I can't give up. . . . Oh!"

"Mildred, just hang on to yourself and fire away. What did you have in your mind when I came into this room?"

"I can't say it, John; it's too unfair!"

"All right, then, I'll say it for you. . . . You wanted me to consent to your being Milligan's mistress. You wanted me to whitewash your adultery, go on as your husband while you lived with him."

She nodded into her hands.

"Well, let me tell you right now that whatever else I may do, I'll never do that. Never! We'll divorce and you'll marry him. If you'd wanted a cavalier *servente* you should have had the decency to fool me and the sense to pick out a lover, gentleman enough not to drive up to my house with sixteen dollars unpaid on a taximeter when he was bringing you from a dinner three blocks away! Damn it, Mildred, what can you love in a gutter-snipe like Milligan?"

She stared at him, lips tense, fists clenched. Then she said, "Everything I've never found in you."

"Oh, hell!" He lurched from the sofa and began to pace the floor. He halted in front of her, legs spread wide. "What have you ever wanted that I haven't given you?" he shouted.

"I don't want to talk about it, John."

"You damned well have to talk about it after saying a thing like that! You take a coarse, vulgar—"

"That's why I like him."

"You!"—an astounded snort.

"Oh, John! You've never understood me at all. You've never known what I am. I tried to tell you before you ever proposed to me, and I did tell you after the first time we lived together, but you didn't understand. I thought you were what I wanted. You weren't. You couldn't be. It wasn't in you. You're too tender and gentle. Too much of a gentleman. And I've always wanted—I've always wanted just what he is."

"And what's that?"

"Somebody terribly strong who'd take me without caresses, without gentleness, coarsely, brutally. It's loathsome. I can't help it. It's myself. And I've—"

"Rape as a steady diet!" His shoulders shrugged contempt. "Why didn't you pick a nigger longshoreman?"

"I might have!" she shouted. "Men like that are the only ones who have ever excited me. I thought you were that. You seemed to be the first night that you kissed me. You weren't. I couldn't help not wanting you. And I tried to let you know, John, before we were married. It wasn't altogether my fault. I'd never have married you if your mother hadn't found us together that—" A sob strangled her.

A staring silence torn by the memories of twenty years writhed and turned interminably.

"Oh, good God!" John whispered. "So I've been torturing you, too." He turned to the sofa and sat, his elbows on his knees, his head in his hands. He sat a

long time without moving. Then a choked sob groaned in his throat. She rose and crossed the room to him and drew his hands from his face. He looked up at her: a long, long look.

"Well, at least we can thank each other for Rush," he said.



It was night. "After all, Mildred, there aren't many alternatives. Either we divorce and you marry Milligan, or we divorce and you remain his mistress, or we stick together and you never see him again." His voice was slow and tired. He was sitting on Mildred's bed, hanging over the mahogany footboard, supporting his head with his right hand. She was crumpled on the sofa clutching a black velvet dressing-gown tight to her breasts as if she were very cold.

"The other alternative I won't admit," he said. "You can't remain married to me and continue to—"

"I know. I know." Her fingers reached out, imploring him to stop and her dressing-gown fell apart revealing the shriveled rinds of her breasts.

"Why won't you marry him?" John's fingers rubbed his temples.

"You wouldn't have married Rose Milligan, would you?"

"No. . . . I suppose not. . . . Perhaps if she'd made me as happy as he's—"

"You know I can't! I don't respect him. I couldn't be a part of him as one's a part of one's husband. . . . I'd be ashamed of him."

"Where does that leave you then? . . . Are you ready to give him up?"

Her fingers began to twist and her head bent down to her left shoulder. Then her chin shot up and her voice rose to a cracked falsetto. "How can I? It's the only happiness I've ever had!"

His fingers rubbed his forehead. "Then the answer's

rather easy. We'll divorce and you'll be his mistress."

A silence.

"What will you do?"

"I'll go to Italy and start a new life."

A silence.

"Well, that's that." He rose unsteadily. "Now we'd better try to get some sleep."

He walked slowly past her. She was clutching the edges of her dressing-gown to her breasts.

"Good night," she said.

"Good night." He closed the door and walked to the stairs, mounted three treads, then sat down to rest. He got up slowly, drawing himself by the banister. The fourth step creaked. He walked to his room and dropped into the chair by his writing table. His fingers rubbed his forehead. "You'll never be able to start a new life, John," he said. "You'll never dare approach a woman again. You'll be afraid of a fiasco." His fingers rubbed his forehead. He stumbled to his bed and fell face down on it. A long time he lay without moving; then he turned over, sat up, and began to unlace his shoes. "The worst thing about life is that when it's over it doesn't end," he said. "It just goes on leaking out." He dropped his left shoe and went on unlacing the right.



Roller skates skirring over the asphalt of the Square ripped the stillness of the late afternoon. John was sitting at his writing table tearing the manuscript of his novel and dropping the scraps into the basket. There was a knock. He dropped the remainder of the manuscript into the basket and said, "Come in."

Mildred opened the door. She was dressed for the street, wearing a black turban lanced by a diamond arrow and a coat of green cloth with collar, cuffs, and skirt of baby lamb. Her mouth was a scarlet knife cutting a paper-white face. He looked at her, too tired to rise or speak.

"John," she said, "I'm going now to George. And I'm going to tell him that I'll never see him again."

"Oh, don't be silly, Mildred!" His brows puckered. "That's all settled. We're going to be divorced and—"

"Nothing's settled. I've thought all night about it, John, and all to-day, and I can't feel right about it. I've been too unfair to you. I'll have what I've done to you on my conscience all my life. I won't make you go through divorce besides."

"I want to."

"Why? You say you'll make a new life. How? You won't. How many women have you ever wanted to marry? And you're not young any longer, John. You want children. That means a young woman. You want passion. That means a passionate woman. If you ever found her, how long do you think you'd satisfy a young woman with the kind of passion that you'd want?"

"Maybe not a week. Maybe I'd find the woman and never even be able to live with her. I don't know. But I don't care. I'd rather risk any unhappiness than admit now that my life's done. And that's what it means if we stick together. But if you go to Milligan you've got something. And I may find something."

"I can't marry him, John. I can't! I'd hate him in a week. And when I think of being his mistress all my life it's just too low. Everybody would know sooner or later. I'd despise myself. Think what mother and father . . . all our friends . . . How could I even explain our divorce?"

"Tell any lies you please. You can divorce me for desertion or cruelty or, if you prefer, adultery. I'll take a girl to a hotel and register her as my wife."

"Then you'd even have to resign the embassy."

"I wouldn't care."

"John, you couldn't be happy without anything to do, without any one in the world to—"

"No; but at least I'd be able to try to find some one who

might love me and give me children. After all, it's not my fault we haven't a child."

"That's not fair, John! You know I tried! And Rush . . ." Her right hand covered her eyes.

He wrenched his eyes away from her and looked at the floor.

"I don't know why," she sobbed; "I don't know why, but somehow—somehow all this seems just a horrible, horrible disloyalty to Rush. . . . John! If I'll never see George again . . . will you . . . will you take me to Italy?"

His head bent forward. Then his body slowly straightened. "No," he said, "I won't. . . . And don't think, Mildred, that I haven't been feeling what you've been feeling about Rush. We're turning our backs on the only beautiful thing in our lives. And I want to make my life one piece, one picture, one whole, as much as you do. But that's impossible now. It's done, finished. If we stick together now it's death, just death, for us both. You'll have no passion in your life and I'll have none in mine. We'll just sit and watch each other growing old and in the end we'll hate each other. And there's still a way we may both be able to find something: cut our relationship with a knife, cut each other off absolutely, never see each other or even write. Yes, I mean it. You can never be a way of life again to me nor I to you. But Milligan can be a way of life to you—maybe a hard, rough way but life—and the other is death. I won't take death yet. I can't. I've got too long to live."

"You really mean you want me to go to George and be his mistress?"

A red wave rose to his forehead. "Yes," he said.

A silence.

"All right." She straightened her shoulders and lifted her chin. "Good-bye." She turned and walked out, closing the door behind her.

He sat a moment staring at the closed door, then he

got up quickly, followed her down the stair, and opened the front door for her. As she passed he took her hand, kissed her finger tips, and said, "Good-bye." She went out.

He closed the door, stumbled into the yellow music room, and dropped into a chair. Through the lace curtains he watched her cross the Square. She moved slowly at first, uncertainly, her body bent and limp. Then she straightened and moved quickly into the further shadows until the cloth and lambskin of her coat were indistinguishable from the grass and the trunks of the trees.

He sat a long time looking into the gathering dusk.

There was a skirr and a shout on the asphalt of the Square. A queue of skating children playing crack-the-whip swung in front of the window through which he was gazing. The leader halted. The whip cracked. A shriek of laughter. Two boys somersaulted to the asphalt. One did not get up.

Then an incredible thing began to happen, a thing so unbelievable that a hot metallic spot seemed to be expanding in his brain searing him to unconsciousness: A young man was lifting the boy and the young man was stooping and rising with a movement which was Rush's movement. The young man stood talking to the boy. His long legs were bowed and the hair which showed under the back of his dark felt hat was black. He patted the boy's shoulder: a gesture as familiar as if Rush's hand had made it. John lurched to the window peering, breathless, for the face. The young man turned and looked at the house. A jutting Corsey nose above a sullen mouth. He surveyed the house, spat toward the house, turned on his heel, and walked across the Square. The shadows swallowed him.

"You're crazy! Crazy!" John stared in a shuddering unbelief. He wrenched away from the window and walked quickly into the hall, holding his head. Pullen was picking up the telephone. "Yes, Mr. Greville, he's right here. Mr. Fulke Greville, sir."

"Oh, damn you, Pullen!" He stumbled to the phone.
 "Hello, Uncle Fulke."

"John, my boy, I've a great favor to ask of you."

"Granted, sir. What is it?" He struggled to make his voice sound normal and gay.

"First tell me if by chance Mildred happens to be occupied this evening?"

"She is."

"Ah! Then you'll come."

"Where?"

"Would you mind doing a bit of slumming?"

"Slumming?"

"At my dinner table. Wayne's let me down, gone to Washington, and I've the most appalling crew of nouveaux riches coming in order to meet an artist who—"

"Oh, Uncle Fulke, really I can't, not to-night. I'm not well. Can't you find some one else: Drayton or—"

"Drayton's already consented to be sacrificed. There's no one, John. And a dinner of twenty. My dear fellow, you must. I'll be pouring my last 1904's before the swine, and if you don't come there'll be no one but Drayton and Bobby who'll—"

"Bobby?"

"Yes. He's over to see about a room he's decorating for Mrs. Leather. You will come, John. I need you. And it will be the last time in my life I'll see you except your farewell dinner. I'll have no chance then to more than wish you good luck, and before you return from your embassy I'll be comfortably interred in Hillcrest. You will come. Please?"

"Nonsense, sir! You'll be giving dinners twenty years from now."

"I trust not; there'll be no wine. You will come then?"

"If you really can't possibly do without me, but—"

"Thanks, my boy, I can't, and I'm truly grateful and—eh—do you—eh—by any chance know how to mix a cocktail?"

"Scarcely. I never do."

"Nor I, and I'm ashamed to have to serve them; but my sherry ran out last week and one must give an apéritif and since this accursed prohibition law it's been impossible to buy a good Amontillado. Do come over a bit early and we'll try to mix them."

"Have you a shaker?"

"No. Won't the ice-cream freezer do?"

"God bless you, Uncle Fulke, you're peerless. We'll try it with two tall glasses. Good-bye."

He walked slowly back to the music room and stood peering at the Square. "But suppose it was. . . . Suppose it was." His eyes stayed open so long that they began to water. He stood at the window until the Square was black.

He walked up to his room, bathed, dressed and slowly crossed the Square. There was a fresh odor in the night air, the odor of springing grass. The benches were all occupied by couples, close couples. He was standing on the white marble steps of Fulke Greville's house watching them when a taxicab stopped at the curb and Bobby lurched to the pavement.

"John!" he bellowed. "Damndgladtoseeyou! Didnt-knowyoudbehere, Mister Ambassador!" He thumped John's back and they entered the house. Silk was handing them their place cards when Fulke appeared in the arched doorway of the drawing-room, white-haired, erect, immaculate, thin as old linen washed to transparency.

"The *bitch*! The old *bitch*!" roared Bobby. "Whadda-youthnk she did, Uncle Fulke! That thief Bidoon! I'll *kill* him!"

"My dear Bobby, I object to the use of 'bitch' as a term of opprobrium. In my experience . . ." As he spoke a door opened at the rear of the hall and a growl rushed out of the shadows.

"Keep her *off*! Keep that dog away from me! I'm scared to death of her, Fulke!"

"Quiet, Brenda." Fulke stooped and patted the bitch's head. Then he kissed her full on the mouth. "Go on out,

old lady. Yes. Go." The bitch waddled sorrowfully away, tail curved under the sag of her heavy belly. "She's due to pup to-night." Fulke smiled after her and wiped his mouth with a silk handkerchief that left a faint odor of amber in the air. "I take it you were referring to Mrs. Leather," he turned to Bobby.

"Whaddayouthnkshedid! I've worked two months on the sketches for her damned room! And to-day she said she didn't *want* it! 'Mr. Basil Bidoon, my decorator, has been spending the week end,' says she; 'and he's convinced me that my character is really entirely Louis Quinze and he has the sweetest Fragonard panels.' *Mad!* The woman's *mad!* That poor little shrimp, Leather, saw I was mighty sore, soeupnsaid he wanted me to do her *portrait*. Anmiredmyworksomuch! Begantoaskmeabout *portraits* I'd done. How *much* full length, three-quarters, bust, with hands, without. Hetakesitalldownonthebackof-an *envelope*, then he looks as if he's thinking very seriously and I wait for an *order*. And he says: 'Um. AsI-figureitthen, it works out to about six hundred dollars a *hand!* I *ran!* Ran! God! Gimmea *drink!*'"

"Will you mix the cocktails?"

"*Will* I!"

John and Bobby were squeezing oranges in the pantry when the front door opened and closed.

"Guests! I shall have to abandon this fascinating spectacle." Fulke screwed in his monocle, traversed the dining-room, and disappeared through the green portières which concealed the drawing-room.

"Now pour the gin, John," said Bobby.

John raised the bottle. Then a woman's voice sounded beyond the portières: a voice that shot up his spine like a spout of ice-cold water. "I came a bit early because I wanted to know who . . ."

John dropped the gin. "Youdamnedfool!" bellowed Bobby, rescuing the gurgling bottle.

"I believe I've collected every one who might possibly be of use to you," Fulke Greville was purring, "Leather,

Roediger, and Fillender: our richest art patrons. Lowden, who publishes all the worst and most popular magazines of the country. Dr. Keyser, a very charming Jew who really knows modern art. The rest are just friends of mine and family, except Alfred Gorge and his wife: he's lecturing here to-morrow: you know—the English novelist."

"Un-hun." Two descending notes like the cooing of a pigeon.

John's legs gave way and he slumped to the pantry chair.

"Whatthdevil's *wrong*?" Bobby peered at him.

"Give me a drink, will you?" said John.

"*Sick*?" bellowed Bobby.

"No, I've . . . Oh, my God!"

"What's wrong, John?"

"I don't know. I don't know." John stared at the green curtains. A crescendo of incoming voices was drowning a low laugh.

"Here!" said Bobby. "You look as if you need it."

"Let's go in," said John.

"Silk! Come shakem now!" Bobby called through the door to the kitchen and followed John into the dining-room. At the curtains John stepped aside.

"After you, Mr. Ambassador," grinned Bobby.

"No. Go ahead. Please go ahead, Bobby."

"*God*! You've become a *nut*!" Bobby chuckled through the curtains. John followed him.

A shifting cluster of backs and shoulders. She was standing beside Fulke Greville, talking to Lowden the publisher, and her poise made Lowden's bulk seem unsure and weak. Fulke beside her seemed as fragile and transparent as the stem of a Venetian glass. There were streaks of gray in her hair, but her brows were still fur-black and the deep eyes under them were coals in which warm lights flickered.

"Miss Michaud, may I present my nephew Bobby Corsey?" said Fulke. Bobby took her hand. "And my

nephew John." Bobby stepped aside and John bowed without meeting her eyes. Her hand was as unfamiliar as if his fingers had never touched it, a hard, masculine hand. He looked up. She was smiling, a broad mirthful smile.

"Hello, John." A sonorous, deep welcome.

"Hello, Nina."

"Ah, you know each other?" beamed Fulke.

"Yes, we even loved each other once a little while," her low voice rolled. "It wasn't like you, John, to do that this morning."

"Do?"

"That article."

"What article?"

"The criticism of—"

"I haven't seen it. What—"

"Don't you even read your own paper?"

"No— That is—I haven't to-day. Was it unfriendly?"

"As vicious as could be."

"Nina! You know I wouldn't have! I didn't know you had things in the exhibition. I didn't even know you were in America. I'll fire that little yapping dog to-morrow. I'm so sorry. Where's the paper? Have you one in the house, Uncle Fulke?"

"Upstairs in the library."

"I'll—"

"Not now. Here are the abominable cocktails."

Silk and Harrison were passing trays. John looked at Nina desperately.

"I'm so sorry, Nina! But what difference can it make to you? Roach is nothing, less than nothing."

"Yes, Miss Michaud." Dr. Keyser's nose had slid up to her left shoulder. "How can a newspaper criticism in Chesterbridge matter to one who stands as you stand in Paris and Berlin and Vienna?"

"It's curious," she smiled, "but it's the only place criticism does seem to matter to me. An old wound, I suppose. You see, Dr. Keyser, I lived on the wrong square

when I lived in Chesterbridge and I once was made to feel very wrong square indeed, and it hurt me and I suppose ever since I've wanted to come back and have everybody take me in and applaud me."

"Well, you're certainly dining on the right square tonight," smiled Dr. Keyser, "and we're all at your feet. At least I am."

"And I." Fulke Greville bowed and handed her a cocktail. "Will you swallow that foul poison and take my arm? My cook's fearfully punctual."

"Uncle Fulke, am I to be seated next Miss Michaud?" asked John.

"That honor, sir, is reserved for your elders."

"Then do you mind if I'm rude and ask Miss Michaud just one private question, now."

"Violently!" Fulke and Keyser turned smiling to the cocktail trays.

"Nina," John whispered, "I saw a boy this afternoon. Was it . . . Was he?"

"Didn't you see his nose and his legs?" she smiled.

"Oh, thank God!" He caught her hand. "Oh, Nina!"

"Do you really care?"

He looked at her.

"Miss Michaud," Roediger trumpeted nasally down on her, "I need a sculptor to do a monument for the boys from my store who were killed in France and I'd like to know—"

"Let's go in." Fulke offered her his arm.

John examined his place card, found Mrs. Lowden's name, discovered the lady herself encased in red velvet, looking as if she needed only occasional tufting buttons to turn her into a sofa, offered her his arm. They went in.

A swoop of butlers lifting silver lay plates and placing oysters.

John looked toward Nina. She and Fulke Greville were talking intimately. Her right elbow was on the table, her chin in her hand. Gray hair. Mother of . . . He stared at her, trying to fit the Nina he remembered into the al-

tered body before him. She smiled suddenly and the memory clicked into place. She seemed unchanged.

"Come, John, she's not that good-looking!" Miss Tarrington, essayist of the *Atlantic*, who was seated at his left, smiled acidly, rustled her black silk, and stroked her cross of old-mine diamonds. "Have you read Edith's latest? I consider it a . . ." She continued to talk to him and he answered her automatically without hearing her words or his own replies, his eyes diverted from hers just enough to retain sight of Nina. From time to time she was concealed by the bull neck and stub fingers of Lowden, who had been educated for control of the magazines of America by a long apprenticeship in the throat-slitting department of Armour's, by the dancing hands of Mrs. Keyser, who had left the *Times* and married Keyser a month after Peyton Dandridge's fall from the asylum window, by the bald, blond dome of Alfred Gorge, the English novelist, who was wow-wow-ing incomprehensibly past his adenoids.

Lowden cleared his throat and wrenched Nina from a private joke over which she was smiling with Fulke. Her glance swept down the table and met John's. He raised his Montrachet to her, solemnly. She smiled and they emptied their glasses. Then Mrs. Lowden whispered, "Doesn't Mrs. Leather look awfully ill?" and he looked toward the former Lydia Demicuzene. Fulke Greville, trying to swing the table, had begun to talk to her; but she was still staring at nothing in particular. "Jews! Really, Mrs. Leather, you must agree with me," said Fulke. "There are only two solutions, there have been only two since time began: marriage or massacre. One can't compete with them unless one's a Greek or an Armenian. If they're as few as in England, one may marry them without breeding that nose and that code of commercial immorality into the race; but if they're as many as in America, there's no solution but pogroms."

"Oh, Fulke!" Mrs. Keyser leaned across the table.

"Yet we all have our favorite Jews, don't we?" Mrs.

Leather smiled mechanically. "Mr. Basil Bidoon's mine. He's too sweet. Who's yours, Mrs. Keyser?"

"My husband," smiled Mrs. Keyser.

"Oh, I . . ." Mrs. Leather's glance fled around the laughing table as if she were a trapped animal.

"That's not quite fair, Sally," beamed Fulke. "Keyser's not a Jew in the sense I mean. He's the kind the others crucify."

Chatter. Chatter. Chatter.

Mrs. Roediger, turning her thousand wrinkles to Bobby: "I liked Lady Astor so much, didn't you, Mr. Corsey? She seemed such a good, moral woman."

"*Moral!* Whaddyamean *moral?*"

"Why, right, of course. Not wrong. Everybody knows what that is."

"I don't know what's right and wrong. I only know what *bore*s me!"

Chatter. Chatter. Chatter.

Drayton Greville answering Gorge across the table: "I agree America's a wonderful country physically; but the majority of Americans spend the greater part of their energies trying to make it an intolerable place in which to live."

Gorge replying: "Wank, wank, wouff, wough, wank, wuff."

Lowden's thick neck thrusting across his bloody canvasback: "Oh, come, come, Mr. Greville! There's no country in the world where so many people have such happy lives. There's no country in the world where success goes so quickly to hard work and brains and courage. Look at this tableful of people. There's not one of us hasn't got success of the highest kind. Look at your own family! You're President of the sixth largest university in America. Mr. John Corsey runs the biggest newspaper in Chesterbridge and he's to be the representative of his country in a great European capital. Mr. Robert Corsey, I'll bet, sells more pictures a year than any European artist. Mrs. Sinclair's husband is Governor and may be

President some day. Your cousin Paul Corsey is a justice of the Supreme Court. Our host is a highly successful capitalist."

"Collector of Turkish tiles, Luinis, and police dogs," murmured Fulke.

"Mr. Theodore Corsey has been made a Baron of England. Where in the world can you show me a family as successful as that?" Mr. Lowden paused triumphantly, and John surveyed the successes who, shamefaced for Lowden, were staring at their plates: Drayton Greville, shriveled to bloodless respectability by thirty years of respectable living with the wife he could not respect; Augusta, dead inside, deaf in one ear from the blow which had never touched her; Eleanor, supporting grimly the burden of Wayne's intolerable success; Fulke Greville with a dog to kiss; Bobby, grinning at Lowden with an impish, malicious delight, Bobby, no faith in any one since Altieri, living on bought bodies and bootleg gin; himself, Mr. Ambassador Corsey! Successes all!

"And look at the rest of us!" Mr. Lowden sat back in his chair and spread his arms. "Mr. Leather has risen from poverty to vast wealth and power. Mr. Roediger has done the same and has set new standards of merchandising for the world. Mr. Fillender started life as a butcher boy, and look at him now! It's no secret his father left a hundred and nineteen millions! Dr. Keyser . . ." He paused uncertainly. "Dr. Keyser's a great doctor. I started slitting hog's throats in Chicago. Look what we were then and look what we are to-day!" Lowden opened his stubby hands and glowed.

Drayton Greville recovered first. "But the point is, Mr. Lowden, how many of us are as well off as an Italian peasant or a Turkish boatman? Are any of us happy?"

Babel. Every one talking. No one listening. "Of course. . . . Happy, I should hope . . . Why not? . . . Who has more reason . . . What do you want out of . . . Who's got a better chance . . ." Sudden quiet.

"May I put it this way?" said Drayton. "Isn't success in America largely futility on the upgrade?"

Silence. Butlers treading softly, pouring champagne.

"I didn't mean to extinguish the conversation," said Drayton. "Apologies. I'll put it differently. I propose a version of Nekrasoff's question: Who can be happy and free in America?"

"I'm happy," bellowed Bobby, draining his seventh glass of champagne.

"You don't even live in America, Bobby." Eleanor shook a finger at him. "Your house is an island of immorality completely surrounded by an ocean of gin. By luck nobody has died yet on the premises. Wait till you serve a bit of wood alcohol. And besides you aren't happy. I know. Uncle Drayton's right."

"*What!*" roared Bobby, summoning Silk by tapping his empty glass. "I'm—"

"I offer myself then for dissection." Fulke glanced nervously at Bobby and plucked the conversation from him. "I am both happy and free in America. I find it a perpetual entertainment of prodigious proportions. 'The Greatest Show on Earth,' if you permit. Where else may one witness the antics of such matchless clowns as Bryan, Billy Sunday, Gompers, our hundred-per-cent American from the London ghetto? Where else are there Rotarians, Ku Kluxers, Methodists, readers of a Book of Etiquette? Where else may one see a hundred million persons bowing daily in worship to old women of both sexes: concoctors of Mann acts, Volstead acts, censors, revisers of the Bible who improve on the morals of Christ by eliminating all references to wine? And where else is one paid for watching a show? And paid so well. I grope for a simile . . ." His fingers met in the air. "I seem to see a capering virgin heifer with a blue face, a yellow back, and a buttoned-down tail who nevertheless exudes perpetually a stream of immaculately conceived milk and answers to the name: America."

"If you feel that way about your country I don't see

why you don't move out," glared Lowden. "You're un-American, you don't like Americans, you—"

"One doesn't need to be a heifer or admire heifers in order to enjoy visiting the barn, does one?" Fulke smiled benignly. "Nor does one need to love a cow in order to milk her. Of course I'm not in your class, Mr. Lowden, or in the class with Mr. Leather and Mr. Fillender and Mr. Roediger. You are epic milkers. But in my small way I've managed to amuse myself. You'll admit it was diverting to be able to sell one's government bonds at a profit before we went into the war and then to invest in coffin factories and find at the end of the war that one's fortune had increased tenfold and that one could buy government bonds at ninety. And the delights of our campaign to bring the boys' bodies home! The virgin cow was thrilled!"

"Of course you don't mean a word of what you say." Lowden attempted to laugh. "And even if it were true you couldn't be happy. To be happy a man has to feel patriotic, be proud of his country, feel he's serving the community, that he's a part of a great onward-moving civilization."

"Unfortunately the civilization to which I belonged no longer exists," said Fulke. "The last vestige of it was buried in John Collingwood's waistcoat pocket. It's gone and forever. One might as well try to restore the age of Pericles. I don't say it was an age of Pericles. Washington, the Adamses, the Lees, the Carrolls, the Byrds, the Van Rensselaers, our grandfathers, were something different but pleasant, pleasant; and to-day we are in the age of the movie, the radio, the exalted pawnbroker commonly termed banker, our national heroes Douglas Fairbanks, Harding, Ford, Morgan, and WJZ Newark. One is tempted to quote that antique country gentleman Mr. Thomas Jefferson: 'God forbid that we should live twenty years without a revolution.'"

John caught Nina's eyes dancing with delight, then the red face of Lowden thrust between. He was stam-

mering, "You—you—you—" Mrs. Lowden leaped to prevent social disaster: "Harry, do tell Mr. Gorge how much you admire his novels. We think they're wonderful, Mr. Gorge. They have that lovely quality of Mrs. Humphry Ward's: while one's reading them one's always in such good society." Lowden slumped back in his chair grunting, and Gorge, smiling, answered, "Wank, wūngh, wouff, wank." Bobby, drunk, whispering audibly to Mrs. Roediger: "Can't unnerstanaworhesays. Can you? Is it false teeth or adenoids that make Englishmen say wouff, wouff?" "Wouff, wank, wouf, wouff." Gorge, oblivious, continued to comment on his works, embracing the whole table in his smile.

"Don't *wouff* at me, old man!" roared Bobby.

Fulke Greville signaled Augusta quickly and they rose. Nina passed John. She was chuckling. Eleanor was waiting for her by the door. They went out together.

"Will you excuse me a moment, Uncle Fulke?" said John. "I have to make my peace with Miss Michaud. That article. In the library, I think you said. Would you mind if I joined the ladies at once?"

"Not at all." Fulke lighted a cigarette. Silk was whispering in his ear. "I'll ask you to excuse me also a moment, gentlemen," he smiled. "I've a new son just born in the yard. Mother and child are reported doing well, but you'll excuse me if I go out and see for myself."

John entered the drawing-room. Eleanor was talking tensely to Nina. ". . . and Uncle Drayton was right. It is all, all futility on the upgrade."

"Nina," said John, "that article. Will you run up to the library with me a moment and we'll prepare any apology you . . ." His eyes implored her.

"All right," she smiled. He followed her out the door, bumping the knees of Mrs. Leather, who was seated on a sofa staring straight before her. They mounted the stair to a cube of tooled volumes. She walked in. He drew the heavy snuff-velvet curtains over the doorway.

"There's the paper." She was moving toward a table heaped with magazines.

"Oh, damn the paper, Nina! We've so little time, we'll have to go down in a minute and I've—I've— Nina, tell me about him!"

"What do you want to know?"

"Everything! Does he know I'm his . . ."

"Of course."

"Does he . . . does he hate me?"

"Oh, no! I've always tried to make him understand. I told him you'd asked me to marry you. I think he really understands."

"And he doesn't despise me?"

"I don't know. I've tried to make him not despise any one ever, never to judge, but he's a Corsey at bottom."

"What do you mean?"

"He believes in things, convictions, principles, believes violently, ready to die for them. That's Corsey, not Michaud."

"Nina, will you . . ." He swallowed. "Will you tell me his name?"

"Raoul."

"Raoul what?"

"Michaud."

"You didn't marry?"

"No."

"You're not about to be married now?"

"No."

"Then, Nina, you've got to do it! You've got to do it!"

"What?"

"Marry me."

"Oh, John, you sweet old thing," she laughed, "don't be ridiculous!"

"Nina, I never was more serious in my life. I never meant anything more. I've separated from my wife. She's gone to her lover to-night. We're going to be divorced. You've got to marry me."

"But why?" Her brows rose in honest amazement.

"Raoul. He'll be legitimate. My son."

"What difference would that make, now?"

"I don't know. I thought it . . . There's one difference at least. I'll want to leave him my money when I die, and unless he's legitimately mine I won't be able to. It's all in trust for heirs of my body and—"

"He won't care about that."

"Why not? He's human and everybody likes to have money."

"Not Raoul. He doesn't believe in that sort of thing. You see, just as your fetish is the Concourse, so his is Lenin. He's a communist."

"He's not!"

"He's lecturing to-night at Labor Hall on the Soviet Constitution."

"To the strikers!"

"Yes."

"It's lunacy, Nina! He'll be—"

"Do you think I haven't told him, haven't tried to stop him! There's no use. It's a sort of religion with him. He's lost all sense of self-preservation. He was in Russia when the blockade started and the children began to starve. He'd gone as an interpreter with the French military mission. Then he saw the children starving, die starving under the blockade. It did something to him."

"I don't care what it's done to him, Nina, we'll make him stop, we'll make him. When can I see him?"

"To-morrow, I suppose, but you'll find it useless."

"But you will try with me?"

"Oh, I'll try anything to stop him."

"And you will marry me."

"Dear John, don't be absurd. That has nothing to do with it."

"Nina, it's not just Raoul. . . . I can't pretend I love you as . . . Well, you're different and I am, but I need some one terribly and you—you . . . well, you are the mother of the only child I have and I . . . yes, I need you."

"It's nice of you to say that, John, but it's just silly, sentimental. There probably aren't two people in the world further apart than you and I. I don't love you. I'll never be able to love you. There's nothing so dead as a dead love. You can't revive it. And can you imagine me living your life?"

"Yes. I can."

"On the sacred Square?" she smiled.

"I'm leaving the *Times* to-morrow morning and sailing for Italy next week. We can be married there."

"And I'd be an ambassador's wife pouring tea for diplomats and royalties!" she laughed. "I have a life, you know, John."

"You mean you have a lover."

"Not just now."

"But you have had."

"Lots."

"Nina, I don't care. And if you don't want to live my life I'll live yours. Can't you understand? I have nothing in the world. I care about no one. I have no child"

"I heard what happened," she said. "I was so sorry for you, John."

"Then you know what seeing Raoul meant to me."

"Yes, I can imagine."

"Then why won't you take me, Nina? I could make his life and your life, too, fuller, richer."

"How? You don't understand, John. Raoul's an agitator, a propagandist. The only way you could make his life richer would be by giving him your money to spend on communist propaganda." She laughed. "And I live in a studio on the Rue du Cherche Midi. There's a woman who comes and cooks my breakfast and supper and cleans up. That's all I want. I don't want possessions, an establishment. They take time and I want to work. You'd take time. And I wouldn't have it for you. I've got just enough for Raoul and work and occasionally a man who happens to entertain me. And I'm happy."

"Couldn't I entertain you?"

"Not that way," she smiled. "Sorry, John, but done is done when it comes to passion."

A silence.

"I suppose it is," said John.

"Shall we go down?"

"Not yet!" He grasped her hand. She drew it away.

"Then you'd better read the criticism so you can talk about it. Your sister has eyes and brains."

He opened the copy of the *Times* which lay on the table and searched for Roach's description of the exhibition.

"There it is," she pointed, "that paragraph."

He read:

Worse than the Brancusis are the Michauds. Inasmuch as Miss Michaud was once a Chesterbridgian we feel constrained to temper the wind of our criticism, but truth compels us to say that of all the puerile disgusting displays of charlatanism we have had to endure since the eruption of cubism Miss Michaud's parade is the most insulting to adult intelligence; her blocks of steel and copper might have been picked up in any machine shop and her blocks of stone in any dilapidated graveyard; and that these chunks of mangled metal and limestone should bear the great name of Michaud is an insult to the memory of her father. Miss Michaud had the misfortune to leave Chesterbridge before she came under the chastening influence of the teachers of our Academy, and did not have the benefit of those contacts which so greatly purified and improved her father's work; but if she ever expects to become an artist she would do well to forget all she thinks she knows and remain in Chesterbridge and learn at the feet of masters the eternal principles of truth and beauty.

"Dirty little yapping dog!" John threw down the paper. "I'll fire him in the morning, Nina. I'm so sorry. I'll write an apology. I'll—"

"Oh, don't bother. I really don't care now. I've seen a bit of Chesterbridge this evening and I think I'm cured of caring."

"It was appalling, wasn't it? Just shows one can't mix gentlemen and bounders."

"One can't mix gentlemen and artists either," she smiled. "One can't mix gentlemen and any one."

"That's not fair, Nina."

"Perhaps not quite. And I do like your uncle Fulke and your crazy brother. But now we're going down."

"No, Nina! There's one thing I have to say to you. . . . There's a letter I wrote you—I wrote you when I found out . . . about Raoul. . . . I wrote you I was coming to marry you. I wanted to marry you. I didn't want any one in the world but you. I went back to England to tell my wife we had to divorce. And I found she was pregnant. . . . I got the letter back from Volaille. I have it still. I want to—"

"I don't want to see it. Even if you had come to me, I wouldn't have married you."

"But you did come back to me when you knew."

"Yes. I did. There's a time when you want the father of the child you're having, want him incredibly. I knew it was the end of me if I went back to you, but I couldn't stay away. I'm glad I saw what I saw. It saved me."

A silence.

"It finished me."

"Haven't you been happy at all, John?"

"Yes. With Rush."

"You poor kid!" Her hand stroked his hair and she kissed him. "Let's go down."

"Nina, even if you don't want me, you will put it to Rush, I mean Raoul. You will leave it to him. And if he says he wants us to marry, you—"

"I'll tell him he can be legitimate if he wants to be. But you know what that will mean, John. If he says he wants us to marry, I'll marry you but I'll never live with you. We'll get married down at Vence where he was born. Nobody need know anything about it. I'll go on with my life and you'll go on with yours."

"No, you won't," he smiled; "I'll make you care."

"Come here and let me wipe my rouge off your lips." She wet her handkerchief on the tip of her tongue and wiped his lips.

"Can I have it?" He reached for the handkerchief.

"If you want." She dropped it in his hand and, smiling, walked out of the room.

Bobby was on the stairs, stumbling down from the third floor, grinning inanely. John caught his arm and steadied him. "You'd better not go down again, Bobby."

"Oh, I'm awri, John. Whayouthnk I'm *runk*!"

"I know you are."

Bobby guffawed. "Who wouldn't be sitting between Mrs. Roediger and Mrs. Leather? Didnyousee the woman's *mad*!" He lurched ahead. John held him.

"Lemme go!"

"Bobby! If you do go down, try to behave yourself. You were horribly insulting to Gorge and he's a very distinguished old gentleman. You ought to apologize."

"Awri. I'll make up to him. Now take your hands off."

Nina was at the foot of the stairs walking toward the drawing-room. John hurried after her, but before he reached the drawing-room Roediger and Keyser had captured her, and his eyes met Mr. Leather's.

"Well, Mr. Leather, our last stockholders' meeting to-morrow morning." John attempted hearty politeness.

"Yes. Yes," said Leather, and looked nervously toward the sofa, where his wife was seated smiling delightedly at Mrs. Lowden, who was urging, "Do sing us something."

"I warn you I shan't make a speech. I'll just propose MacCallum for the editorship and get out," said John.

Mr. Leather looked up. "I have other plans," he said. John's eyebrows rose. "Theodore and I came to an agreement to-day," said Leather.

"You mean he's sold out to you?" John stared.

"Yes." There was no twinkle in Leather's eyes but, as John's jaw closed, the effervescence of an inward smile quivered in the corners of his mouth.

"I wish you great success, Mr. Leather." John bowed and turned his back.

Bobby was swaying in the doorway looking toward Gorge, brows knit. His glance shifted to Gorge's young wife, who was standing beside Mrs. Lowden, urging Mrs. Leather to sing. Bobby smiled, crossed the room, slapped Gorge on the shoulder, and bellowed, "Well, old man, I congratulate you! You certainly have a good-looking daughter."

"Hun wanh my wife."

"*Wife!*" Bobby stared. "Got any *children?*"

"One."

"How old?"

"Six."

"Well, you are a *wonder!*" Bobby's hand descended again on Gorge's shrinking shoulder. "I take back anything I ever said about Englishmen."

Gorge's mouth gaped like the mouth of an agonized fish but no sound came out of it.

Bobby turned to John. "There!" he whispered proudly. "Even if I have a bitoliquor in me do you think I can't act like a *gentleman!*"

Fulke Greville came through the dining-room curtains. "Three sons and a daughter," he beamed.

Chords from the piano. Eleanor was playing the first bars of Grieg's "Ich Liebe Dich." Mrs. Leather was standing beside the piano, breathing deep. "Du mein gedanke," her voice rose. A fit of coughing. "Oh, really I can't! Too much cigarette smoke and I've had such a cold I—" Her eyes searched wildly for Leather. He hurried to her. "Really you mustn't, dear; you haven't been well, you know, and—" He held both her hands. "Perhaps I'd better not. You will excuse me?" Her frightened eyes fled around the room.

"We really must be going home, Mr. Greville." Leather's eyes did not leave his wife's, and he continued to hold her hands in an unrelaxing grip while she smiled

to right and left with mechanical lips that her eyes did not accompany.

Chatter. General rising. Exodus.

"Nina, you'll let me take you to your hotel." John followed her to the hall.

"Sorry, I've promised Mr. Roediger. We have to talk over the monument he—"

"Then you'll telephone, Nina. Please? Please! As soon as you've told Raoul. Even to-night, no matter how late. I know he'll say yes."

She smiled. "John, you're still nine years old."

Mr. and Mrs. Leather's purple Rolls-Royce sneaked away from the marble steps, Leather's face a strained gray blur under the inner light. Mr. and Mrs. Fillender's yellow Rolls crept forward. "Such people to invite us with!" lisped Mrs. Fillender. Mr. and Mrs. Lowden's Lincoln limousine took its place. "Harry, you were disgraceful," Mrs. Lowden turned bitterly on her husband. "We'll never get into the Concourse if you talk that way before the Grevilles and the Corseys." Dr. and Mrs. Keyser and Miss Tarrington climbed into Keyser's Ford sedan. "Poor Fulke!" laughed Mrs. Keyser. "Quite gaga. If he weren't he'd never have had a mixture like that at his dinner table. And his puppies! I believe he thinks he's their father." "Perhaps he is," said Miss Tarrington. The Roedigers' Rolls moved to the edge of the pavement. John helped Nina into it, squeezing her elbow. As it drew away she waved a hand to him.

He walked across the Square. A breeze crept over a bed of hyacinths. He sat down on a bench. In the trolleyless quiet of the night the whisper of the young leaves was audible, rising, falling, rising again. There were couples walking slowly through the Square, arms clasp- ing waists, close, close. He took Nina's handkerchief from his pocket and smelt it. The wind in the maples rose and fell and rose again, unappeased. "He'll say yes," said John. "Raoul. . . . Raoul Corsey." He rose and walked slowly toward his home.

As he crossed the street he noticed that there was a faint yellow glow behind the curtains of Mildred's room. He hesitated, then let himself into the house as silently as if he were a burglar and tiptoed up the stairs. Mildred's door was open. He turned quietly up the flight which led to his room. The fourth step creaked.

"John! Is that you?"—a high, strained call.

"Yes." He turned back to her door.

She was sitting on her bed, wearing her coat and hat, head drooping forward, eyes on the floor.

"What's happened, Mildred?" He closed the door behind him. She did not answer. "Mildred, what's happened?" Her fingers drew across her eyes and down her face and side and her nails scraped the bedspread. "Mildred!"

"He won't have me," she said.

"You mean the swine refused to!"

She shook her head. "It was my fault."

A snort. "That's how they always act! Fine lovers so long as it's cheap! Adultery with no responsibilities! The God-damned swine!"

"No, John, it was my fault!" Her fists clenched and her eyes met his. "I made him, made him despise me." A silence. Her mouth twisted to a tortured smile, her hands rose and fell. "So here I am," she said.

"Mildred, you mean to say that you went to Milligan and told him we'd be divorced and you'd be his mistress and he—"

"That was what was wrong. . . . He didn't want me for his mistress. . . . He wanted to marry me."

"Then for God's sake why don't you marry him?"

"He won't marry me, now."

"What did you do to him?"

Her shoulders rose and her head crushed back on them till the knot of hair on her neck tilted her turban over her eyes absurdly. "Told him the truth," she said.

"Told him . . ."

"That I wouldn't marry him, couldn't ever because I didn't respect him."

"You poor, poor fool!"

"What else could I have done? Lie?" She took off the turban and dropped it on the bed. "That's not my line, John. . . . And I didn't know he'd care so much. You see he—he really loved me." Her teeth clenched and she stared straight before her. Then she began to sob.

"Oh, buck up, Mildred! You'll see, he'll be around on his knees to-morrow morning."

"No, he won't." She shook her head and wiped her nose and eyes. "He's not that kind. He's left women before. I know. And I—I hurt him too much. He's through with me for good." She sniffled back to composure. "I suppose I won't care so much as I think I will to-night. It would have been beastly anyhow to divorce you. I never wanted to do that, John."

"I'm sorry. You'll have to."

A silence.

"You won't let me go to Rome with you?"

"No."

She rose slowly from the bed and her long palms stroked each other, stroked each other in an agony of restraint. "Let's go to bed," she said. "I'm beginning to feel curiously . . . curiously."

"Mildred, I can't stay with you! It will just be a prison, a prison for us both!"

"I don't ask you to," she said, and stood swaying by her bureau, her fingers stroking, stroking. Then she shivered from head to feet, shook herself, unpinned a scrap of paper from the cushion on the bureau, and in a voice that strove to be quite composed said: "By the way, Pullen says there's a leak in the roof. Will you have it fixed?" She crumpled the paper and dropped it into her scrap basket.

"Yes," he said. "Good night."

"Good night." She drew her rings off her long fingers. They clattered on the bureau. He went out.

He was sitting on his bed, his head in his hands, when slowly he became aware of a bell ringing, a bell ringing furiously, the telephone. He ran downstairs and wrenched off the receiver.

"Nina! He's said yes!"

'Come down to the hotel as fast as you can. They've got him in jail.'



A taxi whirled down Fir Street and slowed in front of the neat new colonial brick and marble façade of the Thirteenth District Police Station. Before the taxi stopped a top hat sprang out and a black velvet coat with a chinchilla collar leaped after the top hat. They ran up the marble steps. A man was screaming incoherently behind a door at the far side of a square hall. "Bat him on the bean, Bill," a voice called as they burst into the hall. Four policemen, coatless, collarless, were leaning over a tiny table, peacefully playing pinochle undisturbed by the shrieks. John's hat disturbed them. They rose.

"I'm John Corsey, editor of the *Times*. I believe you have a young Frenchman here. I want to see him."

"Pleased to meet you, Mr. Corsey." A large hand caught his. "I'm Sergeant Donovan. You mean that Bolshevik kid, I guess."

"Yes," said John. "Would it be possible for me to speak to him a moment? I'd greatly appreciate . . ."

"Sure. We're always ready to do anything for the *Times*." The sergeant smiled amiably, glanced appreciatively at Nina, crossed the room to the door from which the shrieks were issuing, and called: "Bill! Trot out number three, will you?"

"Hunh?"

John pushed through the door. A row of cells. A negro clinging to the bars of the first, shrieking insanely, jerking the bars. In the second, a young woman hiding her face with a fox fur. The turnkey opened the third cell, entered, and shook a man huddled in a corner. "Somebody to see you, Frenchy. Get up."

"Oh, go away!"

"Raoul!" Nina pushed past John and the dark figure came into the light. There was a red lump on his forehead and a red bruise on his left cheek bone.

A white smile, turning apologetic. "Sorry, mother."

"Sergeant," said John, "may I talk to that boy alone a moment? Isn't there some room where . . ."

"Well, seein' as it's you, Mr. Corsey, I suppose I might open the captain's office. He ain't on to-night and it ain't regular, but—"

"I'll be responsible, sergeant. It's important. Very important! I'll explain to you later."

"All right, Mr. Corsey, glad to be of service to you. Always glad to oblige our friends. But you look out for that kid, he might try a dive through a window. Them Bolsheviks—"

"Put a man in the street if you want."

"All right. Come on, this way, Frenchy."

An office. A steel desk and two steel filing cabinets. "Now don't try no funny business, Frenchy." The sergeant closed the door.

"Raoul, they've hurt you!" Nina's fingers were touching the bruise on his forehead.

"Not much."

"Oh, Raoul!" She kissed him. John turned away, took off his top hat, and put it on the desk.

A murmur.

"Yes," said Nina. John turned. His son was looking at him quietly, curiously.

A silence.

A smile spread the boy's wide mouth and he said, "Hello, Mr. Corsey," and held out his hand. John took it, speechless.

"You're not so tall as I imagined you," smiled Raoul.

"No," said John. "No." A silence.

"Raoul! What happened?" Nina broke through.

"Nothing much. When I got to the hall there were police in front of the doors. They wouldn't let anybody in.

There were about two thousand people trying to get in. Then some mounted police began riding through the crowd. I got up on the steps and climbed on a fellow's shoulders and called as loud as I could: 'Don't start a riot. That's what the Cossacks want you to do. Don't start a riot.' Then a policeman grabbed me and everybody started fighting at once. So they've jailed me for starting the riot. How long do you think they can hold me, Mr. Corsey?"

"Hold you! They'll jail you for eight or ten years!"

"But they can't. I didn't do a thing."

"Do you think that makes any difference in Chesterbridge? You'll be held without bail. They'll testify you called 'Riot' and that the fighting started the moment you spoke. You haven't a chance. Leather's got the magistrates, the police, and the judges all in his pocket. The judge will instruct the jury to find you guilty, and when they have he'll give you as many years as the law allows. Even if you weren't a communist and a foreigner you'd be jailed. Look at the I.W.W.'s, Mooney. You'll go to jail for ten years unless I can get Leather to let you off."

"You don't really mean that, do you, Mr. Corsey?"

"Of course I mean it. This isn't Russia or France or England or Germany. You can't talk communism here. But I won't let it happen to you. I'll get Leather to let you go. He's no friend of mine but he can't refuse me this."

"I don't know about that, Mr. Corsey." Raoul was looking at the floor. "I don't know as I want to get off that way. I'd rather fight it." He looked up. "I don't want to rat. There are a lot of people believe in me and follow me because I've never ratted yet. I wouldn't think much of myself if I began now."

"Nobody will know how you got off. Stand your trial if you want. But I'll see to it that you get a fair trial, and the judge will instruct for acquittal, and first I'll get Leather to tell the magistrate to let you out on bail."

"Who'll go bail for me?"

"I will."

"That would just about ruin me."

"What do you mean?" John swallowed violently.

"Well, Mr. Corsey, there's not anybody in America who's much more hated than you are by the people I care about. I can't afford to have you go my bail. Nobody would ever trust me again."

A silence. John stared at his son. "Raoul," he said at last, "you don't understand what I want to do at all. I don't want just to go your bail. I want to . . . can't you understand? . . . I want to be your . . . I want to marry your mother. I want to make you . . . make you my heir, have you and your mother live with me or live with you. I want to do what I should have done twenty-five years ago. Your mother's willing if you'll say yes. Won't you do it? I ask you, please, please."

A smile slowly crinkled the skin around his son's dark eyes. "Are you serious?"

"You will?"

"Lord, no!"

"Please, Raoul!"

"Well, it's up to mother." His smile was so broad as he looked at his mother that the entire double line of his square white teeth glinted. "But it's the last thing I want." He turned back to John. "How could we ever get along together? I'll never become your kind of a person and I guess you're not thinking of joining the revolution. Do you really want to marry him, mother?"

"No, and if I should I'd never live with him. I'd marry him just for you, to make you legitimate."

"We might have cared about that once, when I was little," Raoul smiled at her, "but it's a bit late, isn't it? I don't want it now, do you?"

"No."

"Sorry, Mr. Corsey, but I guess that's out."

"Raoul, you're not being fair to yourself or to your mother or to me. Unless you're legally my son I can't

make you my heir. And, I don't care what you think, money is worth something. You'll realize it some day. And what will happen to you if you go on behaving as you've been behaving? I may be able to save you now; but this year or next year you'll be jailed somewhere, smashed, finished. Then your mother will be finished too. Why can't you drop this damned communism and begin to live a life? Paint, sculpt, write, do anything you want. I can give you whatever you need. Do anything you please, go anywhere, but drop the thing you're doing. It's useless anyhow. I don't ask you to live with me, but, damn it, I don't want you killed!"

"That's very nice of you, Mr. Corsey, but I can't paint or sculpt, or write anything but propaganda. And, you see, I do believe in what I'm doing—that is, most of the time," he smiled.

"Nina, can't you say anything to him?"

"I've said it all so many times. It's no use. My life isn't life to him any more than your life would be life to him. My freedom's not his freedom. He's got his own damned life. I wish to God he didn't have!" Her lips were quivering.

"Oh, mother!"

"Raoul!" She held out her hands to him. "At least if you get out now you'll go back to Paris where you can talk and write without being killed for it."

"Sure. I'll go as fast as I can."

"And you'll let me go with you," said John.

"I can't very well prevent you going to Paris, Mr. Corsey," smiled Raoul.

"You know what I mean. You'll tell your mother you want us to marry. We'll marry and you won't mind if I see you sometimes."

"I'm sorry, I don't want that, Mr. Corsey. You can't have secret marriages in France, especially not when you'd have to recognize me legally as your son. Everybody would know and everybody would suspect me from then on. I'd even suspect myself," he smiled. "And you

couldn't stand it long either. I'd be raising all the hell I could and you'd hate me worse every year and be more and more ashamed of me. Thanks for the offer, but let's not talk about it any longer. I won't do it. And you'd better not bother about the bail either; I'll take my chance."

"No," said John. "No. I won't accept that. If you don't want me to arrange for bail and a fair trial, then I'll haul you out of here altogether. I'll get Leather to tell the magistrate to let you go free in the morning. That's what he should do anyhow. There is no reason to hold you. You can't prevent me from doing that. I don't care whether you like it or not. And about the other thing, take your time, think it over, reconsider when you're out of this mess. My God, boy, you're only twenty-four! You don't know anything about life yet. You don't know what you want. You'll change."

"You haven't changed much, have you, since you were twenty-four?" His son's eyes twinkled.

"No. And that's why I've got nothing in my life now but a son who doesn't want to be my son and his mother who won't be my wife. . . . Look here, really, Raoul, I'm not so intolerable, you know."

"No. You're not," smiled Raoul.

"Then you will take time to think it over."

"I'm sorry, there's no use. I can't cut away from my whole life any more than mother could. I'll be glad if you do get the magistrate to let me out. Maybe it's cowardly but I don't want to go to prison. I'll be obliged to you. But beyond that—legitimacy and so on—I won't. Please forget it. I won't think about it again. Please don't talk about it any longer."

"Raoul, please!"

"Sorry. That's out."

A silence.

"Everything all right?" Sergeant Donovan's head poked through the door.

"Yes. Thanks," said John. "We've just finished."

Raoul held out his hand. "Glad to have met you, Mr. Corsey."

"Thanks," said John. "Good right."



John stood in the silent Square. "My God, he's lovely . . . lovely!" he said. Then he looked up at the windows of Mildred's room. He looked a long time. "Nobody will take either of us for a gift!" He began to laugh and, laughing, crossed the street and let himself into his home.



"Now stop it, Miss Sidel." John patted her shoulder. "You'll like your new boss, whoever he is, a lot more than you like me."

"Oh, Mr. Corsey!" Large tears were running down the furrows beside her nose and dripping on her projecting incisors. "Oh, Mr. Corsey, there'll never be anybody like you."

"Well, I'm glad you think so, even if it's nonsense. Now chase out to your office and ring Leather again and send in Mr. MacCallum."

She sniffled and blew her nose and stumbled out the door.

A knock. MacCallum, brightly expectant. "You wanted to see me, sir?"

"Yes, and I'm sorry to have to tell you what's happened. Leather's bought Theodore's stock. I didn't know till last night. I've been expecting his proxy every day, as usual. I wasn't at the office yesterday. I was—sick. This morning I found this cable. Leather's got the paper. I've got nothing to say about it any longer. I'm being kicked upstairs, kicked into an embassy the way old Henley was kicked into the State Legislature when I took this job. I told Leather last night I wanted you to follow me. Then he told me that he owned the paper and said he had other plans. He's not going to make you editor. It's

a damned shame after the work you've done. I don't suppose you'll want to stay on."

MacCallum swallowed hard. "No. Of course not."

"I'll give you any kind of a letter you want to Pulitzer or Ochs or Reid. You'll find Reid more your kind, I think."

"Thank you, sir."

"I am sorry, MacCallum. Leather's just too clever for us. I might have known what was up when I got the embassy so easily. The little white weasel!"

"Who's he going to make editor?"

"I don't know. I've tried all morning to get him on the phone about another matter. He won't answer. The butler says Mrs. Leather is ill. But he's bound to come here soon; the meeting's due in fifteen minutes. I am really sorry, MacCallum."

"So am I, sir. I'd counted on it."

"I knew you had. I'm very sorry. Well, good luck. I'll see you before I leave for Washington."

"At the banquet."

"Lord, no! I'll call that off. Can you imagine me sitting and listening to a speech from Leather extolling my virtue and ability? I'll sneak out of town as quickly and quietly as I can. I'm ashamed. Licked by the Weasel! So long." They shook hands and MacCallum left, eyes on the floor.

Miss Sidel came through the doorway. "Mr. Leather is on his way to the office, sir."

"Then I won't see anybody till he comes, Miss Sidel, and when he arrives please don't let anybody in until I ring. I want to talk to him alone."

He paced up and down his office, hands clasped behind his back, eyes on the rug. He stopped. "It's a hell of a thing to do! But I'll do it if I have to." The little finger of his left hand bent slowly down to the palm and he stood, teeth clenched, face white, waiting.

Miss Sidel's knock.

"Come in."

"Mr. Leather, sir."

Leather walked quickly through the doorway and thumped his derby on the editorial table.

"Good morning, Mr. Leather." John bowed, hands behind his back. "I trust Mrs. Leather is not seriously ill."

"Don't know. Don't know. Athyn's at the house now. Shouldn't have left. Have to get right back. Call the meeting, please." His fingers drummed the table.

"There's something I'd like to ask you first if you don't mind."

"Haven't time for anything this morning; my wife's—"

"I'm afraid you'll have to make time for this. It won't take a minute."

"Well, what is it?"

"That boy Raoul Michaud who was arrested last night shouldn't have been arrested. He was trying to stop a riot, not start one."

"He's a communist. He said, 'Riot.' They rioted. He'll get ten years."

"Mr. Leather, I don't want to detain you by going into details. The simple fact is: he's as innocent as you or I. Therefore, I want you to telephone the magistrate at the Thirteenth District and tell him to let the boy go."

"Well, I won't, so call the meeting, will you?"

"Mr. Leather, I ask you as a personal favor."

"I've asked you a good many personal favors in the past twenty years, Mr. Corsey."

"If I refused, there was always a public interest involved."

"Isn't there in this? He'll be an example to the rest of the foreign agitators not to come to Chesterbridge. How do you know he didn't send me that bomb? It would be better for Chesterbridge if he got twenty years."

"I don't want to argue with you, Mr. Leather. I just ask you to do this as a favor, if not to me, then to our family. After all, you do owe something to a golf ball and a sliced brassie shot."

A furious wave of red rose to Leather's bald scalp.

"You've never been able to forget that, have you? Any of you! You all think you can sneer at me because I once caddied for your father. Well, you know now, I guess, that you can't. I'm in your Concourse, I've got your country place, I've got your newspaper, I run this town now, and you can all go to hell!"

"Thanks," said John. "I should have known that you were the sort of man who could never forgive a favor." They sneered at each other and the little finger of John's left hand crept slowly down and clamped against the palm and he said: "But perhaps we won't go to hell so easily as you think. May I ask where you'll be after this meeting?"

"At Kingsale, with my wife, and not at home to any one."

"Thanks," said John. "I may call. And may I now ask an unimportant question: Whom do you propose to make editor-in-chief?"

"Nobody. It's fool business to have a paper bossed by a writer. Milligan will be General Manager and under him Roach will run the editorial page. Now call the meeting, will you?"

John rang the bell on his desk. Miss Sidel opened the door and Drayton Greville entered, rubbing his hands, all his deep wrinkles smiling. "Well, gentlemen, here I am to vote my one share of stock as directed."

"You won't be needed, Uncle Drayton," said John. "Mr. Leather is going to run this meeting alone. He's just requested our entire family to go to hell. Would you mind accompanying me?"

"Well, but—but—" stammered Drayton. John took his coat sleeve and drew him out the door. "Just please don't ask me anything till we're on the street, Uncle Drayton." He snatched his hat and they stalked through the staring local room and down the stairs. "Now," said John, "I've got a lot to tell you quickly and I ask you please to do just what I say without questions. Go straight to the Thirteenth District Police Station, introduce yourself as

the lawyer of Raoul Michaud, and don't let him come up before the magistrate till I phone you. Raoul Michaud is my son. Yes, my bastard. I won't have him jailed. Leather wants him to get ten years. I'm going to change Leather's mind and have him phone the magistrate to let the boy off."

"How— What—ah—"

"I've had evidence for fifteen years that Mrs. Leather is a bigamist."

"But you can't blackmail him, John!"

"Can't I! Wait and see!"

"But, John, one doesn't do that sort of thing!"

"I know one doesn't. I don't care a damn! I won't let him kill that boy and Nina."

"But surely if he knew the boy was your son, your father's grandchild, he'd—"

"He'd try to give him forty years!" John wrenched open the door of Drayton's limousine, snapped, "Thirteenth District Police Station, Fir Street," to the chauffeur, shoved Drayton into the car, slammed the door, and leaped into his old Locomobile roadster. It roared up Kernel Street, swung around the Square, and stopped with a shriek of brakes at the foot of the brownstone steps.

He ran up to his room, unlocked the drawer of his writing table, and jerked it open so savagely that it dropped to the floor. Under Nina's bracelet, under Rush's music box, under the letter he had left for Nina at Volaille's, lay the long cloth envelope which MacCallum had brought to him from Moscow. He thrust it into the inner pocket of his coat, ran down the stairs, jumped into the Locomobile, and again the engine roared. Through the city it hurried, into the Park, along the winding river road, over the grade crossing and up the long hill to Kingsale. A fence of iron spears with gilded points had replaced the high stone wall, a straight road the winding drive, a mammoth château the rambling house. At the foot of a branching Fontainebleau staircase the Locomobile stopped. Tom Athyn's Dodge coupé was

standing by the steps. John walked up to the front door. A footman in knee breeches opened it. "Mr. Corsey," said John, "I've come to wait for Mr. Leather. He expects me." He entered a huge pink marble hall from the right side of which a marble staircase swept to the second floor. Five lofty windows opposite the door opened on the vista which had once been lawn and meadow leaning away to the far blue hill. The footman opened the door of a cream and gold drawing-room. "Thanks, I'll just walk up and down here. I won't have long to wait," said John, and strode to the center window of the hall. Instead of the wood-flanked lawn, there was a formal Le Nôtre terrace and a symmetrical arrangement of descending fountains copied from Versailles. Even the flower garden had disappeared. Geometrical alleys had been cut through the woods. The chestnuts had died. Only the distant meadows and the far hill were unchanged. John felt the envelope in his pocket and walked back to the front door. There was no sign of Leather. He walked again to the high French windows. The tall maple into which Tom Athyn had flung the dead cat rose far to the right. He opened the center window and walked out to the terrace, and the spring odor of the woods seeped into him, vivid as an echo. He closed his eyes and stood in the Kingsale of his childhood. The purr of a Rolls-Royce mounting the long hill crept through the stillness. "It's a hell of a thing to do! A hell of a . . ."

He felt the envelope in his pocket. Then his shoulders slowly straightened. The little finger of his left hand clicked against the palm and he strode to the front door.

Leather hopped out of the purple Rolls and mounted the outside staircase with quick little steps, eyes set, fingers plucking nervously at his round little chin. He handed his derby to the footman and John spoke: "Mr. Leather, you'll excuse this intrusion, but I have to speak to you a moment alone."

"What are you doing here? What is it? I haven't time. Dr. Athyn—"

"Alone, if you please."

"If it's about that boy, don't bother me again."

"It is and about your wife."

"What!" Leather's eyes narrowed. "Come in here!" he ordered, and walked into the cream and gold drawing-room. John closed the door.

"Now what are you talking about?"

"Before I say anything I want to ask you a last time to go to the telephone and tell the magistrate to let Raoul Michaud go."

"What the hell is he to you? I suppose you're in love with his mother. Well, I don't care if you are or not. I've told you he'll get ten years. And he will. What's the use of taking my time?"

"Mr. Leather, I've asked you to let him go because he's innocent. I've asked you to let him go as a favor to me and to our family. I tell you now that you'd better let him go for the sake of your own family."

"What are you getting at? Trying to threaten me?" A contemptuous snort.

"I don't want to have to threaten you, Mr. Leather; but I tell you now that if you won't do what I ask, you won't have much life left."

"One of the Corseys turning to blackmail!" A sneering smile: a smile interrupted by a voice in the room above trying to sing a scale, rising, rising, rising to a shriek. "What do you think you've got on me?" shouted Leather. The shrieking voice rose higher and higher, scraping insanely. A tremor distorted Leather's set mouth and his little hands knotted into fists. "What have you got on me?" he shouted, and stood, face twitching, tears starting in his eyes. The shrieking voice scaled an ultimate torturing insanity. "Oh, Lydia, Lydia!" Leather bolted, sobbing, from the room. John reeled and stood swaying, staring at the floor while the voice in the room above shrieked on. Then his hands covered his eyes and he began to cry.

The shrieking voice was silent. He shook himself and

started toward the door, but his thighs were shaking and to keep from falling he slumped into a gold chair. He sat a long time without moving, staring at the parquet floor. Then he rose, opened the door to the hall, and started to go. A familiar voice sounded from the marble staircase. Tom Athyn was walking down. "How is she? How is she?" Leather was imploring, grasping Tom's arm. "Better, I think," said Tom. "Certainly I wouldn't advise you to put her under restraint, yet. Except for the singing she appears to be perfectly sane. We had a very friendly, normal conversation before she started that. She seems to be quieted when I talk to her. I think she likes me. I'll come each morning and perhaps I'll be—" A volume of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* whizzed past Tom's head, cutting his sentence. Mrs. Leather was standing at the head of the marble staircase, laughing uproariously. Leather and Tom ran up to her. John sneaked out the front door.

He got into the Locomobile and started slowly down the long hill. Then he stopped the car and sat looking at his hands.

His head bent lower and lower till it touched the wheel. He straightened, shook himself, and sat staring at the sky. Then his hands quivered up in a gesture of utter futility. "There's nothing to do . . . nothing . . . nothing!" His head fell again to the wheel.

A locomotive whistle sounded, a whistle rushing toward the crossing, its cry rising in a furious crescendo. He straightened and looked toward the sound, and the light of a solution whitened his eyes. The bell at the crossing began to ring. The gates slowly closed. His hand trembled to the gear lever, his toe pressed the accelerator and the Locomobile charged down the long hill. The gatekeeper jumped into the road and waved his red flag frantically. The Locomobile plunged on, the hum of the motor rising with each rod to meet the rising whistle. The gatekeeper sprang to the roadside and began to wind up the gates. The express crashed over the crossing and

John's foot sprang suddenly from the accelerator to the brake and his hand jumped to the emergency. The Locomobile lurched, skidded, stopped. A whirl of dust and cinders. The train disappeared.

"For Christ's sake, Mr. Corsey!" The gatekeeper stood by the automobile trembling.

"Sorry, sorry," said John. "I just thought of something different. I just thought . . ." He was staring straight before him as if the gatekeeper were not there. "Yes. That's it," he said, and his heel pressed the starting button and he drove into the Park without looking at the gatekeeper, still staring straight ahead, driving slowly at first, then faster, but carefully.

Drayton Greville's limousine was standing in front of the police station. Reporters, strikers, negroes, policemen, were pressing up the steps. John pushed through the crowd into the captain's office.

"Ah, here you are at last." Drayton caught his hand. "Magistrate Gloninger, may I introduce my nephew Mr. Ambassador Corsey. Captain Lowry—Mr. Corsey."

Two broad Irish mouths said, "Pleased to meet you."

"I'm sorry if I've kept you waiting, gentlemen," said John. "I've just been out at Mr. Leather's house, as Mr. Greville doubtless has told you, conferring about the case of this boy Michaud. We've considered the matter from all angles and it appears to be highly undesirable that this case should be handled as the other cases have been handled since the strike started. In the first place it seems to be evident that all he said was, 'Don't riot.'"

"We can handle that all right, Mr. Corsey," grinned Captain Lowry. "I've got the boys lined up the usual way you and Mr. Leather want."

"But we want something quite different in this case. You see we don't want a scandal and that boy's mother is a very prominent international figure."

"And a mighty good looker." Magistrate Gloninger sat on the desk. "She's out there now with him, and I ain't seen a finer figure of a woman in many a day."

"And as we've got the strike in hand and all the other leaders in jail we don't want any more limelight on Chesterbridge. It's not good for business."

"Hell, Mr. Corsey, who's going to bother about him? He's a red and a foreigner. He ought to be jailed," said Captain Lowry.

"Well, captain, ordinarily I'd agree with you, but this is a special case and Mr. Leather and I have gone into it thoroughly. First we thought it would be better to hold him on bail; but we finally decided to ask you, instead, to let him off altogether this morning."

"What?"

"And I can promise you both you won't lose by it. My brother-in-law, Governor Sinclair, will see to that."

The captain and the magistrate glanced at each other.

"Well, of course, Mr. Corsey, since you put it that way, I see there's more in the case than you're telling us and I'll be very glad—" Magistrate Gloninger rose from the desk.

"Thank you. Thank you," said John. "And you, captain?"

"I'll speak to the boys right off."

"Do you mind if I wait here till the proceedings are over?" John dropped into the captain's chair.

"Make yourself at home." The captain opened the top drawer of his desk. "Have a cigar?" He winked and opened a mammoth cigar box revealing a bottle of whisky and a glass.

"Thank you, captain." John poured a drink. "Here's looking at you and seeing you head of the force. And you magistrate on the bench."

They went out, chuckling.

"How did you do it, John?" Drayton Greville peered at him. "Did you have to threaten him?"

"No." John propped his elbows on the desk and held his forehead in his hands.

"Oh, I'm delighted! I couldn't bear to think of you lowering yourself to blackmail."

"So far as that's concerned I lowered myself all the way." His voice was weary to exhaustion. "I decided to do it. I started to do it. I'd have done it if I'd had the courage. But his wife was ill and I was just too soft."

"Then how did you convince him?"

"I didn't. He wants the boy given ten years. I just lied to those fellows."

"John!"

"Yes—pretty low, isn't it? We'll have to save them somehow from Leather. I'll speak to Eleanor and get her to try to handle Wayne. I'll have to take care of them somehow from now on."

Drayton was staring at him as if he were a strange monster.

"Say it," said John.

"I don't know what's happened to you, John."

"Neither do I. I don't know anything any more . . . about myself or about life. I wonder if anybody does." A pause. "Oh, yes, I guess I do know. I guess I'm just getting into step with modern life, just adopting the standards of Mr. Leather and the rest. I went out to catch a weasel, so I had to act like a dirty little dog."

"But it's worse to become like Leather than to be destroyed by him!"

"I said something like that to Theodore once. It's nonsense. Wait till he has you cornered."

"My dear boy, character isn't nonsense, principles aren't nonsense."

"No, it seems to me now that principles are just suicide. If you have them you die, and the people who haven't live. But I don't even know that it isn't better to have them and die. I'm glad I've done what I've done this morning: I don't seem to care about anything except saving that boy: but I'll never respect myself again." A pause. "But maybe I will. I don't even know that. I don't know anything. I don't even know that principles haven't always been death. We sit up, like last night at Uncle Fulke's, and blame modern life; but you weren't

killed by modern life and I wasn't killed by modern life; we were killed by our own inherited ideas. We were killed by Chesterbridge, the old Chesterbridge we sob over now. It kept you from respecting the woman you married and kept me from respecting the woman I loved. That's what killed us both."

"I don't admit for a moment that—"

"Uncle Drayton, you're President of the University and I'm an ambassador, and what in hell does life mean to either of us?"

"I don't care to discuss my personal emotions, John."

"Sorry." John poured another drink.

"And you're confusing two distinct things, your personal life and the life of the world."

"One can't live except in the world," said John.

"No, and I admit I feel as ill at ease as you do in modern America; but that's because the world you and I were born in and fitted to is gone. And it's gone all over the earth. We were brought up in the age of horses, with life tuned to a horse pace and manners and morals fixed by gentlemen landowners, gentlemen who hunted, and nowadays—why, my younger children can't even remember the time when horses were taken seriously. They've always lived with automobiles, phonographs, aeroplanes, telephones, movies, wireless. Beauty and happiness to you and me is quiet country beauty. To them! I can't even discover what it is. We're closer to Homer and Theocritus than we are to them. We're lost in a forest of machines and advertisements and banks. I admit I hate what's happened to America. Half my classes at the university want to become bond salesmen! But where is life any different? Paris has become a suburb of New York, London is trying to become one, Mussolini is trying to turn Italy into an imitation of Illinois, even the Turks have quit their old civilization and adopted ours. China is trying to do the same thing, so is India. Japan has done it. The whole world has

passed into the machine age and you and I are as alien to it as if we were fifth-century Athenians."

"And all we have to look forward to," said John, "is Raoul's world, I suppose. Communism! But who in hell knows anything!"

"Nobody. All one can do is to be true to one's self and follow one's own line to the end."

"And I quit doing that this morning," said John. "Have a drink?"

They drank in silence. "You mustn't be too hard on yourself, John. You mustn't feel too badly." Drayton patted his knee. "I'm afraid you've never learned to forgive anybody anything. And that's the first thing one ought to learn in life, I think: to forgive other people; and last and hardest, to forgive one's self. You can't be happy unless you do. I've learned to forgive myself."

"Maybe I will," said John. "But that's not Chesterbridge."

A growl and a cheer. Feet hurrying out of the police station. They rose. The door burst open and Nina flung herself into John's arms. "Oh, John, you darling!" Raoul grinning happily. Handshakes. "You'll lend me your car, Uncle Drayton?" said John. "Certainly." John pressed the hands of the captain and the magistrate. "Very grateful. Very, very grateful!" Nina and Raoul followed him to the street.

Photographers, motion picture operators, staring policemen, cheering strikers.

"North Chesterbridge Station as fast as you can go," John whispered to Drayton's chauffeur.

Raoul wedged himself on the back seat of the limousine between John and Nina.

"It may be more comfortable if I sit this way," said John. His arm crossed Raoul's shoulders. "Now lean back," he said.



The New York express rolled into North Chester-bridge Station.

"You'll promise me you won't stay one hour in New York," said John. "Get the first train to Canada or, if you've got friends who can manage it, ship as a hand on a boat for France and not under your own name. I don't know whether they'll dare go after you or not, but you'll promise not to risk it."

"All right, Mr. Corsey, and I'm very obliged to you. I'm sorry you had to do such a thing on my account. I'd never mind doing it, but it must have been against all your convictions, and if I'd known I'd rather have fought the case out for the principle of free speech."

"Convictions are drip and principles are suicide," said John. "Get aboard."

"I'm sorry, too, I can't do what you want," said Raoul. "But I'd like to see you again some day, like to be of use to you some day."

"Don't you understand yet, boy? You are of use to me. Can't you understand what it means to me just to know you're in the world?"

Nina's arms went around him and her lips wet with tears clung to his.

"All aboard!"

He walked away blowing his nose.

The train puffed off.



He stopped three times to rest as he mounted the stairs to his room in the house on the Square. Mildred was standing by his writing table. There was a letter in her hands: the letter he had written in the Meurice to Nina Michaud. He stood and looked at her too tired to speak.

"I've read this, John," she said.

A silence.

"I'm sorry," she said. "Sorry about everything, from the beginning. If I'd ever known what had happened I wouldn't have held you a day. I'd have divorced you any

day you'd told me . . . even before Rush was born. . . . I hope you'll be happy now."

"It would never have been of any use if you had divorced me, Mildred. Yes. Maybe to you but not to me. She wouldn't have had me. Ever. She won't have me now."

A silence. Mildred's eyes grew wider and wider.

"Then what are you going to do?"

"Go to Rome . . . and I hope you'll go with me."

"I can't, John, if you . . . if you feel . . . if you feel it's a prison, a—"

"Maybe it won't be so bad as we imagine and, even if it is, I guess we're too old to get out of it now. . . . I'm not good for a new try, Mildred. I don't believe you are, either. And we'll be less lonely if we stick together. One needs a hostess in an embassy and you will meet people who may amuse you."

"But it's not a life, John!"

"We can pretend it is: pretend our marriage is an end in itself, absolutely worth preserving. Lots of people do. And at least our lives will be all one picture. We'll follow our own line to the end."

"But what will we feel when we're really old? What will we feel when we . . . we . . ."

He swallowed and his shoulders shrugged hopelessly. "Well, we can always say, 'We had Rush and we preserved our marriage.'"

Her thin lips writhed. "Oh, John, it would be so much easier if we could only die now!"

"Unfortunately one doesn't do that sort of thing," said John.



The limousine was turning past the brownstone church at the corner of the Square. It passed the marble portico of Aunt Gertrude Carrollton's house, the marble steps of Fulke Greville's, the granite of the Club. John turned his head and looked back at his home. Pullen and

Pounder were standing on the brownstone steps, watching them go.

"John, we forgot the leak in the roof!" said Mildred.

"Oh, well, let it go," he said. "We'll probably never come back here anyhow."

Children were skating between the trim beds of hyacinths and tulips, and the shadow of the apartment house was creeping slowly across the Square.



THE END

